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1817



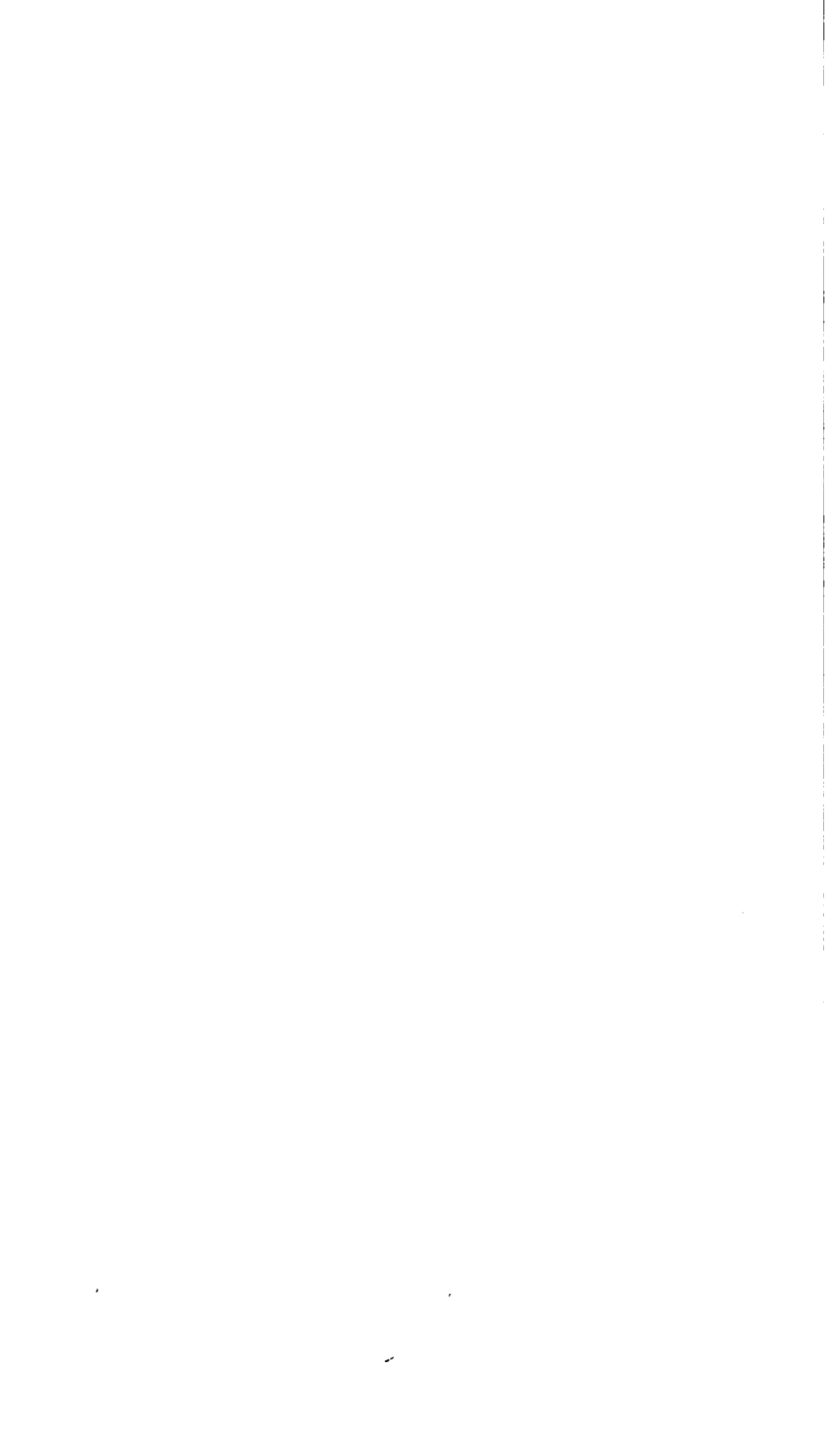
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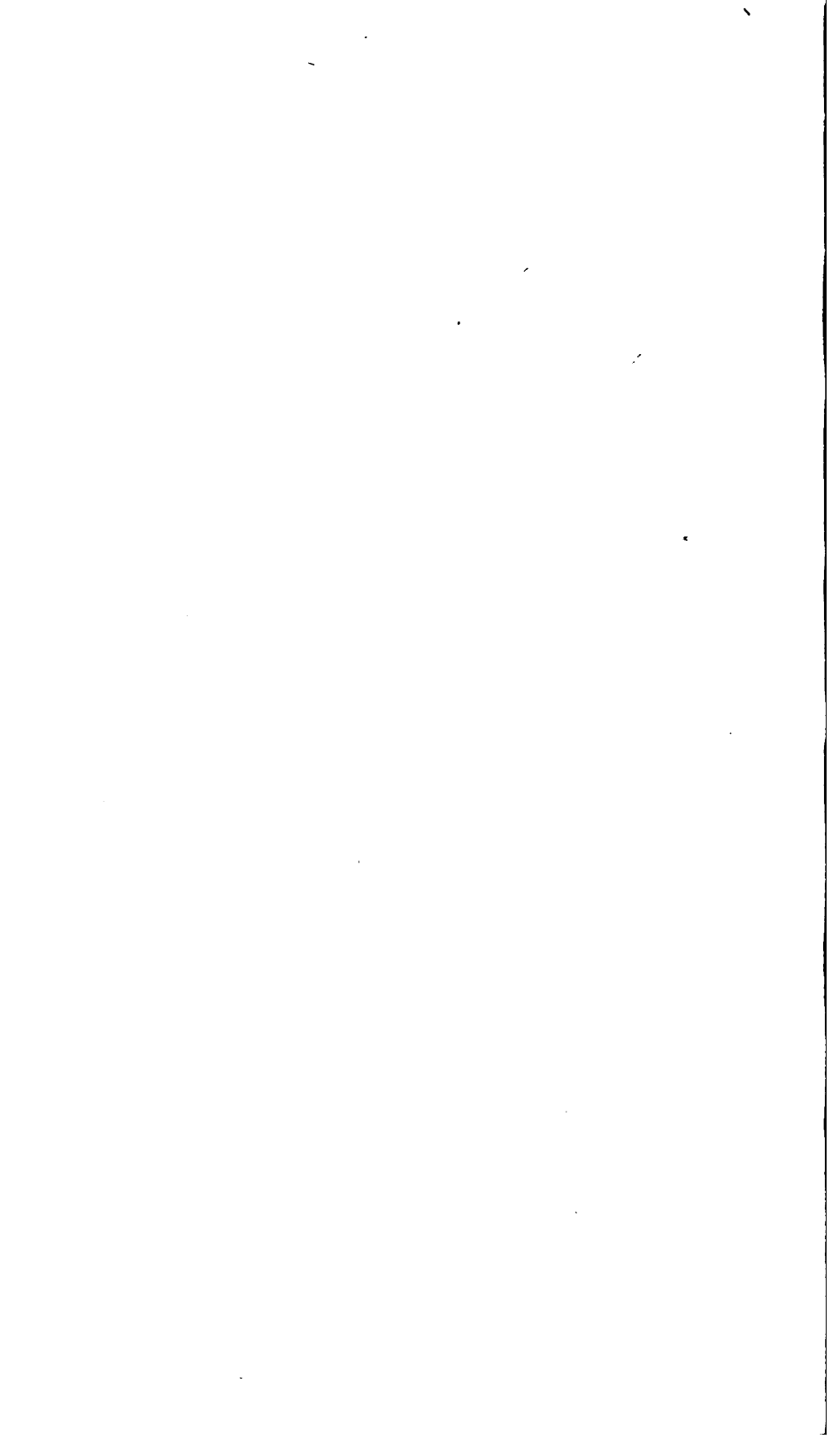
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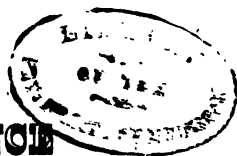
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CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN THE

HON. JOHN ADAMS, *pres. U.S.*

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES;

AND THE LATE

WM. CUNNINGHAM, Esq.

BEGINNING IN 1803, AND ENDING IN 1812.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY E. M. CUNNINGHAM,

Son of the late Wm. Cunningham, Esq.

True and Greene, Printers.....Merchants' Hall.

.....
1823.

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DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO WIT:

District Clerk's Office.

~~~~~  
SEAL. BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the eighth day of August,  
~~~~~ A. D. 1823, in the forty eighth year of the Independence of the  
~~~~~ United States of America, Ephraim May Cunningham, of the said  
District, has deposited in this Office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims  
as Proprietor, in the words following, *to wit* :

"Correspondence between the Hon. John Adams, late President of the United States  
and the late Wm. Cunningham, Esq. beginning 1803 and ending in 1812."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act  
for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and  
Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies, during the times therein men-  
tioned:" and also to an Act entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled  
An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts  
and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies during the times therein  
mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the Arts of Designing, Engraving  
and Etching Historical, and other Prints."

JOHN W. DAVIS,

*Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.*



## INTRODUCTION.

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THIS correspondence is presented to the American people, with an exclusive view to their information and benefit. The seal of secrecy, which was imposed by the survivor, is broken by the triumph of death over his correspondent. It has now become the property of the public and of posterity. The Editor is influenced by a deep solicitude for the welfare of our republic, and an anxious wish, that its institutions and liberties may be transmitted to an interminable futurity. He deems it an imperative obligation upon every citizen of this great and free nation to contribute, according to his means, to the preservation and glory of this invaluable inheritance.

The history of nations, is little else, than the history of individuals; and, the existence and prosperity of the one, depend upon the purity, patriotism and public spirit of the other. In all nations, which have risen, flourished and fallen, the causes of their decline and overthrow, may be traced to individuals and families. An inordinate and unprincipled thirst for power, on the part of the few, at the expense of the many, has always been the inveterate bane of liberty—the *semen dissolutionis* of political communities.—Men are, by nature, free and equal; but, there is, among them, a perpetual tendency to inequality. Society is constantly diverging into the extremes of affluence and power, on the one hand, and penury and weakness, on the other.



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The progress to these extremes, is accelerated, in direct proportion to the distance from the medium. An increase of strength, gives new energy, and every accumulation sharpens the appetite for more. On the other hand, defeat destroys confidence, and every failure paves the way to a repetition, till a great majority of mankind, sink into listlessness and indolence, and become the servile instruments of pampered power. The operation and extension of this principle, has created all those iron despotisms, which have humbled and crushed the human family.

It is the spirit and intention of our republican institutions, to correct this tendency to monopoly, and to restrain individual and family aggrandizement. In this, consists our pre-eminence, in freedom and happiness, over every other nation. It is the bulwark of our liberties. When this corrective power shall be yielded, we shall become a degraded people. It is the duty of freemen to guard it, with untiring vigilance. By a constant recurrence to first principles and an unceasing inspection and scrutiny into the conduct and characters of our distinguished men, we may hope to preserve our rights and perpetuate them to future generations. However elevated his rank—powerful his connexions—or, unlimited his hold upon the estimation and confidence of his countrymen, we should not shrink from summoning the delinquent to that tribunal, from which there is no appeal—to the tribunal of public opinion.

In times of revolutionary excitement, it is easy for a man of a restless and daring spirit, to throw himself into the stream and roll on with the tide. By activity and address, he may mould the ingredients of a community in commotion, to his own will and pleasure, and acquire power and influence with wonderful facility. The splendor of success, achieved by his associates, may throw a halo of glory round his name, and the enthusiasm of a nation, may assign him a



place among her worthies, which posterity will permit him to retain, if the mask be not removed by his subsequent career. In the hurry of events, it is impossible to form a correct estimate of his acts, and to foresee the ultimate objects of his ambition. It is only, when the storm is over, that his motives may be developed and his true character delineated.

It cannot be doubted, that the fame of Mr. Adams would have gone into future times, with a brighter train, if his public labours had ceased, with the termination of the revolution. By retirement, he might have preserved a rank in that luminous galaxy of heroes and statesmen, who achieved our independence. But, every act of his, since that epoch, has removed him farther from the proud elevation, to which a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances and the unsuspecting gratitude of an emancipated people, had raised him. It was not, however, till he became chief magistrate of the nation, that his real character and designs were known. It was now, that his aristocratical principles and selfish policy, appeared in all their hideousness. The people saw his rapid strides towards despotism, and, that he aimed to wrest from them the sovereignty and secure it to himself and family. It is unnecessary to recount the obnoxious acts of his administration; for, they are fresh in the recollection of every citizen. It is in vain to attempt to charge the odium of this reign of terror upon his constitutional counsellors; for, the maxim, that "the king can do no wrong," is not recognised in our political creed. The Executive, possessed of the appointing power, and having a negative upon the legislature, is amenable to the nation, for the policy and practice of the government. The eyes of the people are directed to the Supreme Head; and, notwithstanding its immense patronage and influence, which are calculated to dazzle and blind the million, Mr. Adams,



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clothed, as he was, with the revolutionary mantle, could not sustain the scrutiny. The voice of a free people, called him from power and consigned him to the shades of Quincy, where it would have been well for his future fame, if he had devoted the remnant of his years, to the cultivation of his farm and of philosophy. But his feelings and principles and desires, were not fashioned upon the model of the Roman Cincinnatus. The shadow of departed glory, lingered in his fancy, and stars and diadems still danced on his vision. He saw in every object around him, engraven in capitals, the memento, *NON SUM, QUOD FUI*.

It is well observed, that the truest delineations and traits of human character, are found in private intercourse and in familiar correspondence. Here, the mind discharges its sentinels—the heart is liberated from the restraints of policy and affectation—and, the whole man unbends and displays the ingredients of his composition, and speaks the language of his real feelings and sentiments. It is in this plain and unclouded mirror, that the American people may now behold the character, who once presided over their destinies, and who assumes to be their political father.

It will be seen through the whole tenor of this correspondence, that, in the estimation of Mr. Adams, no person in the nation, of any party, is entitled to consideration or credit, except himself and his son, who, when appointed to an important office, "*is banished, because he is too just!*"—They seem to be specially designed by providence, to take this infant nation into their keeping, and to hold her in safe leading-strings, through successive generations. Thrice happy America, for possessing such a race! How blind and infatuated, for entrusting the reins, for a moment, to such ignoble hands as Jefferson and Madison!

From the letters written in 1803 and 4, it appears, that Mr. Adams' imagination was incessantly disturbed by the



grisly goblin of Democracy. This monster had broken the chains, with which, he had been bound, in his reign, and was now stalking through the nation, and leading the people to seduction and ruin. The same uneasy and unhallowed ambition, which characterised him, in public, pursued him to his retreat. Envy, jealousy and resentment, burned in his bosom; and, he conceived the herculean project of prostrating the reputation of his successor, and of raising himself and his family upon the ruins of republicanism. His immediate friends and *connexions*, and the newspaper scribblers of the day, at his instigation, embarked in the business of calumny, and the administration of Jefferson, was assailed, with a venom and virulence, unparalleled in the annals of any other age or nation. He affected to shudder at the calamities, which the *infidel* President was preparing for his country; and, an appeal was made to the religion and morality of the people, to avert the impending desolation. The torrents of abuse and defamation, which were poured out, with unsparing profusion, upon the republican chief, may be traced, with unerring certainty, to the prolific fountain at Quincy. The federalists were upbraided with the charge of apathy and indifference to public concerns, for not coming to the attack, with more zeal and fury and devotion to their prostrate leader. "Anecdotes from memory," conjured up in the dark caverns of spleen and resentment, were furnished to be wrought into political essays, and palmed, for facts, upon the nation.

Amidst all this confusion and war of elements, Jefferson stood, like Atlas, upon a broad and immoveable basis, with his head in clear sunshine, above the clouds. His administration was energetic, without armies—dignified, without gag-laws—and, the treasury abundant, without direct taxes. The principles of the Constitution, went into complete and harmonious operation, and the resources of the



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country, were developed, to the credit of this, and to the admiration of other nations. Religion and her altars were preserved from profanation—temples of literature and science were founded and patronized—and, an immense population spread into the western wilderness, carrying the habits of industry and enterprize, and the principles of civil liberty. The people flocked to the republican standard; and, the result of the second election, demonstrated, that republican principles had taken deep root in their affections.

The game was up. Republicanism could not be overthrown; and, we hear nothing more from our correspondent, about the abandoned "Rake, Democracy." A long and portentous silence ensues, interrupted occasionally by a small gun in the shape of a poetical lampoon, which, like the scattered fire of a retreating enemy, shews more of imbecile malice, than of magnanimous courage.

It would be a curious investigation to look minutely into the chasm of years, in this correspondence. But, the secret workings of the passions—the humbled pride—the stifled hatred and resentment—the writhings and agonies of conflicting desires, must be left to conjecture. The result only is known. Unconquerable ambition gained a victory, *et omnia alia cedant*. To this triumphant passion, truth, consistency, former principles, and gratitude to former friends, associates and supporters, must yield.

Mr. Adams has laid it down as a principle\* that "if a family, which has been high in office, and splendid in wealth falls into decay, from profligacy, folly, vice or misfortune, they generally turn Democrats, and court the lowest of the people, with an ardour, an art, a skill and consequently with a success, which no vulgar Democrat can attain." Upon this principle, the irrevocable decision is taken, and conversion to democracy is re-

\* Vide Letter VI.



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solved upon, as the only means of recovery, by his family, of departed power. It does not appear, whether this, conversion was a gradual work, or whether it came in a blaze of lightning like that of his "exemplar Paul."\* The only account furnished by Mr. Adams, is, "they cannot sink me lower than the bottom, and I have been safely landed there these eight years." "I will not die for *nothing*," and "my SONS are very much delighted, that I have taken the subject up." The speculation was without hazard.—Nothing to lose; but the possibility, if not the prospect of "a success, which no *vulgar* Democrat can attain"! Who would not embark with such odds in his favour?

The time for the explosion arrives—the volcano bursts, and red-hot streams of lava are poured through the columns of the Boston Patriot, sweeping away characters, and burying the peace of families, in their march. The destroying spirit has gone forth; and, nothing can arrest his career. The sanctuary of the dead is violated. The ashes of him, who once wielded the sword, and fought our battles by the side of our Washington—Those ashes, which once were animated by the celestial fire of genius and eloquence, are drawn from their repose and scattered in the winds. The distinguished individuals of the party, which raised him to power, now that its ascendancy is gone, have become "British Bears and Tory Tigers," and must be hunted down. The French have become a very clever people; but, John Bull has turned his dreadful eye-balls upon us, and will ere long trample us in the dust. "Democracy" has become a Deity and its "Islam" a vicegerent,—and, "I and Jefferson have always been friends"—*Ecce, nos, poma natamus!*

My countrymen, it would be trifling with your feelings to pursue the analysis further. It would be offering indignity

\* No irreverent allusion to the apostle, is intended: Mr. A. uses the expression in application to himself.



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to your good sense and discernment, to draw the inferences and explain the great end and design of this and a simultaneous conversion. . They are written in flaming characters upon the front of the transaction. Let the voice of reason and of patriotism be heard. They make their solemn appeal, to the democracy of Maine—to the republicans of New-Hampshire—to the freemen of the Green Mountains—to the whole people of this nation, to pause and consider, whether it be safe to engraft a Scion of this old Stock in our tree of liberty—where, it might shoot up in rank luxuriance and overshadow and destroy it.



## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### LETTER I.

QUINCY, *Nov. 28th*, 1803.

*Dear Sir,*

I received on Saturday your favour of the 21st—had before received the copy of your Oration, which you mention in it, and since that, have received the other, that you sent first. For all these favours I thank you.

The Brochure, which contains much valuable matter, I have read with a lively interest, and high pleasure. I wish I had patience, and leisure, however, to make a few friendly remarks. But, as I have not, I shall confine myself to one or two questions. The first is, have you not fallen too deeply in love with Mr. Ames' style? The second is, where you found your authority for your quotation in (n. p. 10) page 31 and 32, which you say is from Mr. Jefferson's Letter to Judge Wythe, 1776. I never knew nor heard



of any letter to Judge Wythe from Jefferson. The words quoted, viz :—"The dignity and stability of Government in all its branches," &c. are taken from my letter to Judge Wythe, in 1776.

Some time in January or February, I believe, in 1776, or if I am mistaken in the recollection of the month, certainly, very early in that year, I wrote the pamphlet in question, which Richard Henry Lee procured to be printed by Dunlap, in Philadelphia, under the title of *Thoughts on Government, in a Letter from a Gentleman to his friend.*—Being applied to by a printer many years after, I gave permission to re-print it, with my name, who wrote it, and Mr. Wythe's, to whom it was written. By the quotation you make, I suspect that some rascal has reprinted it, and imputed it to the name of Mr. Jefferson.

I wish you success, Sir, in your literary pursuits and all others, and am, with kind regards to your family, your most obedient servant,

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. William Cunningham.*



## LETTER II.

FITCHBURG, Dec. 2, 1803.

*Dear Sir,*

I duly received your favour of the 28th ult. I know your time is much employed, yet, I cannot restrain the wish, that you would have "patience and leisure to make the friendly remarks" which arose on the perusal of my performance. I am sufficiently sensible of inaccuracies to be admonished, for the future, against too much confidence in my own information. A friendly eye to discover faults, and a friendly hand to correct them, are benefits which a just precaution recommends to writers of more accuracy and of better advantages than myself.

In answer to the two questions proposed in your letter, I say—That if my style is like Mr. Ames', I may with truth assert, that I am not a copyist. I think myself tolerably well acquainted with the merits of Mr. Ames: while I admire the strength of his imagination, I must say that I think it greater than the solidity of his judgment: I am deeply sensible of obligation for your friendly hint.



My authority for the quotation (n. p. 10) is the federal prints. If my memory is faithful, the letter to Judge Wythe has been imputed to Jefferson in a number of them. I found the extract I used in 'Thomas' Massachusetts Spy, which is generally considered correct:—I herewith forward the paper for your inspection. I cannot conceal my mortification at not being informed of the *real* author of the letter; nor can I suppress my indignation at the intention, or incautiousness which steals from one and cheats another. If you would suggest a method for the correction of the error in my publication, I would most readily conform to it.

Permit me to renew remembrances to your family, and to assure you of my being, with profound respect,

Dear Sir,

Your most Ob't. Serv't.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams,  
Quincy.*



## LETTER III.

FITCHBURG, Jan. 10, 1804.

*Dear Sir,*

I have ascertained that Mr. Adams' Sermon at the Dudleian Lecture was not published; a copy was deposited in the archives of the University, agreeably to the will of Judge Dudley. I am informed, in a letter from the Rev'd. Mr. Cushing, of Ashburnham, that it was a laboured discourse on the validity of Presbyterian Ordination, for which Mr. Adams was much complimented.

I have for some time been collecting materials to present the Public with a full view of the character and conduct of Mr. Jefferson. I am informed that such a work is preparing by Mr. Colman of New-York, under the eye of Gen. Hamilton. If I should really find the design in better hands, I shall relinquish it. I am, at present, encouraged by the promised aid and patronage of some valuable friends. If I should proceed in the work, the time most favourable for effect at the ensuing election will be chosen for its appearance.



I wish to discover every arcanum that would be of use to develop the true character of the Salt Mountain Philosopher. This mountain has increased the wonders of the world to eight, and, if Mr. Jefferson would sink a tomb in a part of it for himself, it might, better than being a Mummy, preserve his body and memory through succeeding ages.

But to return. No man living has so thorough a knowledge of Mr. Jefferson's transactions as yourself—it is necessary, therefore, to the perfection of my plan, that I should assume the confidence to apply to you for some particulars. If, Sir, to promote my patriotic purposes, you would refer me to interesting incidents in Mr. Jefferson's career, I promise most seriously that no indiscretion or unfaithfulness in me shall expose or abuse your goodness.

In the year 1800, I wrote, Sir, a lengthy outline of yourself. It was first published in the Providence Gazette, and was copied into most of the federal papers thro' the Union: It has, perhaps, passed your perusal. It was acknowledged by gentlemen, who had been long in public life, to contain some facts which were not previously of notoriety; and I was assured, parti-



cularly by Judge Bourne, that it essentially served the federal cause at the Presidential election in Rhode Island, where I then resided. I have rather mentioned this to refer you to a specimen of the manner in which the work contemplated will be executed than from any personal views; tho' I will not dissemble that my exertions and my admiration would not be abated by your auspices, but they would give activity and animation to both.

I have the honor to be, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

P. S.—If it would be more agreeable to disclose yourself in conversation than in writing, I would do myself the honor of waiting on you.

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#### LETTER IV.

QUINCY, *Jan. 16, 1804.*

*Dear Sir,*

I ought to acknowledge my fault in having two of your kind letters to answer at once. I return you with thanks, Mr. Thomas's Spy, in which my poor "Thoughts on Govern-



ment" are wickedly and libelously imputed to "*the greatest man in America!*" This was received in your letter of Dec. 2d.

I thank you for the trouble you have taken to ascertain that Mr. Zabdiel Adams's Sermon on the Validity of Presbyterian Ordination, was not printed.

I would not advise you to relinquish the project you have in hand, because another has the same. If the two persons you name, are engaged in such a work, you may depend upon it, no good will come of it. There will be so many little passions and weak prejudices, so little candor and sincerity in it, that the dullest reader will see through it. The Cincinnati and the Essex Juntos, and there is one of these in every State, will cry it up, but the louder they extol it, the less influence it will have in the nation. The jealousy of the people, will be excited and not without reason, when they see the President of the Cincinnati arranging his forces, in battle array, though it be but a war of the quill, against the Presidents of the United States, one after another.



You are much mistaken when you say that "no man living has so much knowledge of Mr. Jefferson's transactions as myself." In truth I know but little concerning him. You will see by the Journals, that he came first into Congress in autumn, 1775 : but he never stayed long in that assembly. During the short visit he made us, he and I agreed very well in sentiments and votes and were very good friends, but he never took any share in public debates ; in Nov. 1777 I left Congress, and was appointed to go to Europe. During my absence, I had no correspondence with him, nor information concerning him, till in 1784 he came to Europe, united with me and Dr. Franklin in fifteen Commissions ; and full powers to treat with all or nearly all the powers of Europe in these Commissions. We acted together for one year ; but as he lived in Paris and I at Auteuil, three or four miles asunder, we met together seldom, but on business. Although we agreed always very well, there was no very close intimacy between us. In 1785 I was sent to England, where he made me a visit, as he afterwards did in Holland : but there was never any sparring between us, nor



much communication but by letters of no great interest.

After his return from Europe, he was Secretary of State for a short time, and afterwards Vice-President for four years: but I had little intercourse with him, except in common civilities. He always professed great friendship for me, even when, as it now appears, he was countenancing Freneau, Bache, Duane and Callender.

No information could be obtained from me sufficient to compensate you for a journey:—*But if you shall be in Boston on other affairs, a visit from you will be always agreeable.*

The outline you mention I never saw, the editors in Rhode-Island seldom sent me their papers. I should like to see it very well.

*Anecdotes from my memory would certainly be known. There are some there known only to him and me, but they would not be believed, or at least they would be said to be not believed, and would be imputed to envy, revenge or vanity. I wish him no ill. I envy him not. I SHUDDER AT THE CALAMITIES, WHICH I FEAR HIS CONDUCT IS PREPARING FOR HIS COUNTRY: FROM A MEAN THIRST*



OF POPULARITY, AN INORDINATE AMBITION, AND A WANT  
OF SINCERITY.

I write in confidence in your honor as well  
as your discretion, being your hearty well wish-  
er.

J. ADAMS.

*Mr. Wm. Cunningham,*  
*Fitchburg.*

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## LETTER V.

FITCHBURG, *Feb.* 15, 1804.

*Dear Sir,*

I duly received your esteemed favor of the 16th ult. I assure you without reserve, that I shall not misuse nor abuse the confidence you repose in me.

By the first opportunity I had, after the receipt of your letter, I sent to Mr. Russell of Boston for a paper containing the *outline* that you have so flatteringly expressed a wish to see. Expecting, post after post, to receive the paper, I have delayed an answer to your obliging letter—Either he has not forwarded me a paper or it has miscarried. I have now transcribed, and have enclosed, a copy from the man-



uscript. I notice a few marks in the manuscript which indicate, that when it was transcribed for the press a few trifling variations were made—an incorrectness in one of the dates was rectified. I wrote it under very considerable disadvantages, and its publication was hastened for the purposes mentioned in my last respects. I am very sensible of its insufficiency to do you justice, but of its adequacy to the proof of my high esteem, I feel the strongest confidence, and on that consideration, I allow myself hopes of your favourable reception of it.

I have taken leave to send you herewith a copy of my Eulogy upon the death of your illustrious predecessor in the Presidency.

Permit me to use this occasion to present my most cordial regards to your family.

With perfect respect I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

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## LETTER VI.

QUINCY, *Feb.* 24, 1804.

*Dear Sir,*

I have received your favour of the 15th, with its enclosures. I thank you for the out-



line, as well as the eulogy. I am sorry you had the trouble of transcribing the former, which I see was written, as the Italians speak, *con amore*. Speaking of the classification of scholars in our College before the revolution, you consider rank and wealth as anti-republican principles of precedence. Is this correct? About five and forty years ago, I was in company with the oldest Colonel, John Chandler, of Worcester, when a newspaper was brought in, containing an account of the last elections in Rhode-Island. All the principal magistrates were of ancient families. The old gentleman's comment upon it, was this—"I have always been of opinion, that in popular governments the people will always choose their officers from the most ancient and respectable families." This has been the case generally in Connecticut as well as Rhode-Island, and in every republican government, in Greece and Rome and Modern Italy, in Switzerland and Geneva. The more democratical the government, the more universal has been the practice. *If a family, which has been high in office, and splendid in wealth, falls into decay, from profligacy, folly, vice, or misfortune, they*



*generally turn democrats, and court the lowest of the people with an ardour, an art, a skill, and consequently with a success, which no vulgar democrat can attain.* If such families are numerous, they commonly divide. Some adhere to one party, some to another, so that which ever prevails, the country still finds itself governed by them. Consider the conduct of the Winthrops, in this State, the Livingstons, in New-York, the Madisons, in Virginia, &c. The whole power and popularity of Virginia, I am told, is now in the family connections of Mr. Madison. You are young, and have much time to observe and to reflect. In theory, all governments profess to regard merit alone, but in practice, democratical governments certainly regard it as little as any. You see I have reason to repeat my intimations of confidence.

It certainly was never any "humiliation" to me to see thirteen of my classmates preceding me. I never thought much upon that subject.

Have you seen Mr. —————'s Manifesto, proposing Mr. Sullivan for Governor, and Mr. Heath for Lieutenant Governor. With what inimitable power of face it is written! These



people talk with as much gravity and solemnity as if they thought they spoke truth. Do you know the character of Mr. —————? I have had some experience of his intrigues.— Talents he has: But candour and sincerity belong to other people. Cool, dispassionate, and deliberate insidiousness never arrived at greater perfection.

With kind regard, I am, &c.

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. William Cunningham,  
Fitchburg.*

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## LETTER VII.

FITCHBURG, *March* 9th, 1804.

*Dear Sir,*

The unusual obstructions to travelling, prevented my receiving your favor of the 24th ult. till a day or two ago. I am sensible to that discernment, which has discovered in the "*con amore*" of the Italians, the real temper in which I wrote the outline. I wish it had been more just to you, and that I could find encouragement, now, that the public attention is en-



gaged in designating a President, to bring it before the public in a more finished form.—This Sir, is the spontaneous effusion of my feelings. Your goodness will, I trust, excuse it. Under no circumstances, should I scarcely dare to ask the approbation even of your silence to such an intention.

Accept, too, dear Sir, my grateful acknowledgments for describing the causes and the course, which produce and guide the leading democrats. I read with avidity, and treasure up with care, the counsels of wisdom and experience. The awful spirit of democracy was never so prevalent, nor in so great progress in our country, as at the present day.

The “manifesto” I had seen, but was unacquainted with the author. An “inimitable power of face” indeed, have they, that can persist in such exploded falsehoods, with such brassiness. Seriously would I advise them to sell their visages to the coppersmiths, to be made into boilers for Sal Montanum.

Of Mr. ————— I have no knowledge, and but little information. I think I have heard the *Duke of Berkshire* describe him, as possess-



ed of that restless and aspiring ambition, which, disregarding means, would raise him to a post in government, or cause his suspension between the posts of ignominy.

Judge Sullivan is as great a trimmer and time-server as, perhaps, can be found. He has long angled in the dirty water of democracy, but has never filled his net, though he has several times broken it.

His eye has been, and is, steadily fixed on the chair of state. At first, he courted assistance from the Clergy; but now, I expect, he means to make a push upon pure jacobinic principles. I have never seen any thing from his hand that contained so much designing meanness, as his "Sketch of the Life of Samuel Adams." His present nomination unfolds his designs, and we see that the baits thrown out are swallowed. He may blame his friends for a most unfortunate designation of an associate. The ponderosity of the "Marquis of Granby" would keep any one from rising who is attached to him. The "sweat," which "our General" says has profusely fallen from his face, has watered many a plant of renown; but the fruits



of them all, are not worth a mess of green peas, and, he is so strongly tainted with the cow-yard, that he must, I think, be offensive in the Council chamber.

There may be more severity than good sense, or prudence, in these remarks, but I really consider such clod-pated politicians as fit subjects for the most cutting strokes.

With sincere and cordial remembrances to your family, I am, with the highest regard, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

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## LETTER VIII.

QUINCY, *March 15, 1804.*

*Dear Sir,*

Your favor of the 9th is received. I beg you would not say a word about me in relation to the subject which you say now engages the public attention. I am no match for these times, nor for the actors who now tread the stage. You say, the awful spirit of democracy is in great progress. I believe it, and I know something of the nature of it. It is a



young rake who thinks himself handsome and well made, and who has little faith in virtue.— When the people once admit his courtship, and permit him the least familiarity, they soon find themselves in the condition of the poor girl, who told her own story in this affecting style.

Le Lendemain il osa davantage :  
 Il me promit Le Foi de mariage.  
 Le Lendemain ...il fut entreprenant.  
 Le Lendemain il me fit un enfant.

The next day he grew a little bolder—but promised me marriage. The next day—he began to be enterprising: But the next day—O Sir! the next day he got me with child.

Democracy is Lovelace, and the people are Clarissa. The artful villain will pursue the innocent lovely girl to her ruin and her death.— We know that some gentleman will arise at last, who will put the guilty wretch to death in a duck. But this will be no friend of the lady. Perhaps a son, a pupil or a bosom friend of Lovelace, himself. The time would fail ~~me~~ to enumerate all the Lovelaces in the United States. It would be an amusing romance to compare their actions and characters with his. The fed-



eralists appear to me to be very inattentive to public events as well as characters. Mr. Sullivan's writings in the newspapers during the whole of the last year, under feigned signatures, his biographical sketch of Mr. Samuel Adams, and especially his pamphlet on the constitutional freedom of the press, have never been regarded, nor, that I know of, seen or read. The pamphlet ought to be read. There are good things in it, as well as notable traits of the character of the author. In all these writings his ambitious views are written with sunbeams. It will be a great thing, if brother Langdon should be governor of New-Hampshire, and Sullivan, the second governor Sullivan, in New-England. I dont wonder he was not willing that the noble family of Sullivan should be shut up in a hole. His ambition, if it were of a right character ought not to be censured. There is an honorable, laudable and virtuous ambition, but it is always attended with candor, sincerity and veracity. With an abundance of laborious application, with an ardent imagination, and a tenacious, though inaccurate memory, with a volubility of eloquence, and a great deal of art—



which, however, never could conceal his art, there are faults in him, which, unless the people are more degenerated than I believe they are, will forever prevent him from being a successful rival to Mr. Strong. If he lives, I believe he will teaze the national or state government into some appointment of him, to something or other; for, his modesty is but a very little restraint upon his solicitations.

You see, I still confide in your discretion, being, with esteem and regard, your very humble servant,

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. William Cunningham, Jr.  
Fitchburg.*

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## LETTER IX.

FITCHBURG, *Sept.* 19, 1808.

*Dear Sir,*

In a letter which I had the pleasure some time since, to receive from you, you expressed some reproof of the inactivity of the Federalists. Their conduct at present, is not liable to such a censure; perhaps it may deserve the



reproach of intemperate ardour. The zeal of party has certainly attempted to overbear the freedom of private opinion, and even totally to overthrow the character of him who would exercise that right—these are among the consequences of party rage, and they are deeply to be deprecated.

I have read every thing which has appeared concerning the Embargo, and I lament, most sincerely, that the bitterness of rebuke, so often manifested towards your son, has been extended to yourself. Of the course of Mr. John Quincy Adams, I have been an attentive observer, and have never discovered in him a deviation from sound principles; if he had given his assent to the Embargo, under a limitation of its duration, it would, perhaps, have been better. As a pause for deliberation, in a moment of peculiar peril, I have thought the embargo necessary; but, for an independent nation, great, rich and powerful, alarmed at the edicts of foreign courts, to break up at once, and forever, the usages which had grown habitual, and of which their natural situation was the origin and nurse, would be an extremity that



no circumstances could excuse. That, such a measure would be opposed by your son, his resolution, introduced into the senate, soon after the imposition of the embargo, is ample proof. The necessity for a temporary inhibition of our trade, indeed the exceptionable edicts themselves, arose, from the imbecility, which ensued from the previous mismanagement of our affairs. Thinking favourably of the conduct of Mr. Adams, I commenced, in January last, some papers which to number six, were published in Boston. In the seventh number, I defended his conduct—descanted on his talents, and hinted at the policy of his selection by the federalists, as their candidate for the first in the magistracy of the nation. This number, the editors refused to publish, and my knuckles were rapped for having written it. The project of a coalition with the Clintonians, I have always condemned. If a candidate cannot be found who is popular on the other side on the bare reputation of being their friend, without, in fact, being on any side, but that of his country, I should much prefer to have General Pinckney opposed to Mr. Madison, even against a possibility of



success. I know not, dear sir, what your opinions are on the present state of our affairs. To a report, which is current in this part of the country, that you are on the side of the executive, through the whole of his administration, I oppose the history and maxims of your life.

May I take the freedom to ask of you, your opinion on the public measure which has so agitated our Country? I take some confidence, in making this enquiry, from the circumstance, that you have confided to me opinions, interesting as any can be, which you may express on the Embargo. The answer with which you may favour me, shall be added to the stock of my port folio, subject to no other disposition than what the deepest solicitude for your fame may hereafter dictate.

Please to make my most cordial remembrances acceptable to Mrs. Adams; and your family.

With veneration and esteem,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*



## LETTER X.

QUINCY, *Sept. 27th, 1808.**Dear Sir,*

The papers to number six, which you mention in your kind letter of the 19th, I have never seen nor heard. In what paper or pamphlet were they published?

The federalists, I think, might suffer my old lamp to go out, without administering their nauseous oil merely to excite a momentary flash, before it expires.

Do you think the federalists believe themselves, when they say, that I am on the side of the executive, through the whole of his administration? Do they believe that I approve of the repeal of the Judiciary law, which I recommended to Congress? which I believe to be one of the best of laws? which was made by the advice and repeated solicitations of the Judges, for several years? which I took infinite pains to organize with a selection of the ablest men and fairest characters in the nation? a repeal, which I always believed to be *a violation of the constitution*? Do they believe that I ap-



prove of the neglect and mismanagement of the navy? The omission to build more ships? The neglect to fortify our most important cities and exposed places? Do they believe that I approve of the repeal of the taxes, which would have enabled us not only to make the necessary preparations against the formidable dangers that surrounded us, but gradually to diminish the national debt? Do they believe that I approve of the *removals* of so many of the *best men*, or the *appointments* of so many of the *worst*? Do they believe, that I approve of twenty other things, too many to be enumerated? Oh no! They believe no such things. But they are conscious, they have injured me and mine, and are only forging false and awkward excuses for it.

It is true, I have not joined in the clamour against the purchase of Louisiana, because I know, that if the union of the northern, southern, and western states was to continue, the free navigation of the Mississippi was essential to its preservation. I have not joined in the clamour against gun-boats, *though I despise them*, because I thought gun-boats better than nothing, and because, I thought the government.



ought not to be opposed in any measures of defence merely because they would not adopt such as I thought the best. I have not clamoured against the embargo, because I thought it a necessary temporary measure, well knowing that it could not be of long duration. I agree with you, that it ought to have been limited to some period. Any long continuance of it, is not conformable to my feelings or judgment. I had much rather hear a cry in Congress, like that which has so often sounded in the British Parliament, "Who shall dare to set limits to the commerce and naval power of this country?" In refusing to acknowledge a right in Great Britain to impress seamen from our ships, in opposing and resisting the decrees and orders of France and England, in resisting the outrages and hostilities committed upon us, the administration have my hearty wishes for their success.

You have read in Thompson's Liberty :—

" Amidst the low murmurings of submissive fear  
And mingled rage, my Hambden rais'd his voice,  
And to the laws appeal'd."

Mingled fear and rage are now the predominant



passions of our nation, and such is the noise and fury, that the still small voice of reason cannot be heard. *If I were only forty years old, I might have enthusiasm enough to hope that I could ride in the whirlwind.* But at seventy-three it would be delirium.

I have nothing to hope or wish but repose, and they will not allow me even that small consolation.

As I am not consulted by any party or any individual, I take no share, and very little interest, in the approaching election. Hamilton's ambition, intrigues, and caucusses have ruined the cause of federalism, by encumbering and entangling it with men and measures, that ought never to have been brought forward. I have no objection to Pinckney, but a full persuasion that he never can rise to the chair, and, a more complete conviction still, that he ought never to have been nominated for it.

As you have mentioned my son, I shall take the liberty to say, that his conduct, as far as I know it, has been able, upright, candid, impartial and independent. His letter to Mr. Otis, I applaud and admire. His resignation I approve.



*He would have been more politic if he had declined his invitation to the caucus,* though the question was only between Mr. Madison and Mr. Monroe, and knowing both, I should certainly, as he did, prefer the former to the latter.

The policy of a limitation to the embargo, is, in a national view, and on a large scale, a nice question. I should, probably, have been for it, but there is so much to be said on the other side, that I cannot censure my son for agreeing to it, without limitation, believing as he did and had reason to believe, that it would soon be repealed. The Federalists, by their intolerance, have gone far towards justifying, or at least excusing, Jefferson for his; and for the future, it seems to be established as a principle, that our government is forever to be, not a national but a party government. How long such a maxim can be maintained consistently with any civil government at all, time will determine. While it lasts, all we can hope is, that in the game at leap frog, once in eight or twelve years, the party of the ours will leap over the head and shoulders of the ins; for, I own to you, I have so little confidence in the wisdom, prudence or



virtue of either party, that I should be nearly as willing that one should be absolute and unchecked as the other.\* Thus, sir, I have given you some hints of my general views of things, *but I wish to remain in obscurity, and by no means to become the subject of conversation or speculation.*

My family returns your compliments to yours  
with your friend,

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. William Cunningham,  
Fitchburg.*

\* The following note, in the hand-writing of Mr. Adams' correspondent, is appended to the original letter from Mr. A.

"Mr. Adams has since determined which of these parties he would have 'absolute and unchecked,' although it appears by this very letter, that the party he would now have dominant, have *violated the constitution*, and done many reprehensible acts. And he has so far got the better of the 'delirium of seventy-three' that he has mounted the seat of Phaeton to guide the chariot of fire through the murmurs of submissive fear and mingled rage."

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## LETTER XI.

FITCHBURG, Oct. 5th, 1808.

*Dear Sir,*

The papers, to which you have obligingly asked a more particular reference,



were published in the *Palladium*, with the signature of Chatham. I deemed their composition in a higher strain than my principles suggested, to be necessary to arrest the public attention. In moments of peculiar excitement, the ruling passion is frequently the only avenue through which sober reflections can be conveyed to the judgment; and, that pass is often times best secured by a vapouring herald; but bold and boisterous as mine was, delusion kept the ground against him. My design, as I communicated it in the envelope of my first number, was to shew that neither Mr. Jefferson, nor a convert to his crude opinions, would be proper to preside over this commercial nation—and, to an enlarged view of commerce, I intended to add an illustration of its advantages by examples. Objections to Mr. Jefferson, brought after them an obligation to specify the qualifications, which, a free, opulent and independent people should regard in the choice of their chief magistrate. These qualifications are, I conceive, eminently combined in Mr. J. Q. Adams. I spoke of him on a thorough acquaintance with his political course; and it did not



escape me, that he was the first writer in this country, who publicly arraigned the pretensions of Genet, and that his appointment to the Hague was the well earned, but unsolicited reward of his extrication of the Executive from the embarrassments and perplexities in which he was involved by the bold and extraordinary proceedings of that hair-brained and contagious revolutionist. But, in addition to a competent capacity, an indication should be taken from the temper of the times, in which there may be something either to impede or facilitate "the march of great talents." From this consideration, the pretensions of Mr. J. Q. A. derived vast accession ; it appeared to me, as if Providence in favour, had caused proof of his patriotism and independence to spring out of his integrity, in a trying situation, for the very purpose of ensuring to his virtues a passage to the Presidency. It was for acting conformably to these impressions that I met the repulse I have before related. The declination of the editors to print the panegyric, was graciously enough expressed, in a letter—it was by others, that I was reprimanded.



In a succeeding number to that which contained the exceptionable matter above, (for I sent two numbers at once) I was so unfortunate as to provoke censure for advancing what is now considered an indefensible tenet in politics. In opposition to the opinion of a sprightly author, who has lately appeared with the signature of Espriella, I asserted it to be politic in a nation, to associate manufactures with their trade, and that it was not too soon to begin, in this country, to link them together. Denied a vehicle for such speculations, I discontinued writing them. The frankness, sir, with which you have replied to my letter of the 19th ult. encourages me to seek an elucidation of an event, the causes of which I have never seen publicly unfolded, and, which Col. Pickering has nearly pronounced inexplicable—I mean his dismissal. In his last printed letter, he says, you never told him what it was for! I was in Philadelphia soon after that transaction, where I heard it accounted for in the following manner: That Mr. Liston, expressing to the Secretary his apprehensions of another mission to France, was quieted by the Secretary's assurances that



another would not be made—That, when another mission was soon after concluded on, his aversions to any farther negociation with France were so untameable, and so indecorously expressed, as to render him an unfit medium for the communications between the two governments, and unsuitable to remain in a ministerial station. As this explanation furnished adequate reasons for his dismissal, I was easy with it, but it cannot give me the satisfaction of your own exposition.

I have taken the freedom to enclose a newspaper, which contains, on its first page, some observations written by me on the manufacture of cider, which may, possibly, amuse.

With veneration and esteem,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

*Quincy, Mass.*

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## LETTER XII.

QUINCY, Oct. 15, 1808.

*Dear Sir,*

The information in your last letter, to look in the Palladium for certain specula-



tions, is very agreeable. As I have never subscribed for that paper, I have never read them. Indeed I seldom see it. Your friendship for J. Q. Adams, encourages me to say, that Washington was indeed under obligations to him, for turning the tide of sentiment against Genet, and he was sensible of it and grateful for it. The enthusiasm for Genet and France and the French revolution, was at that time, almost universal throughout the United States, but, in Pennsylvania, and especially in Philadelphia, the rage was irresistible. Mifflin, M'Kean, and all the principal popular men in that state, were openly for war against England in alliance with France. Marat, Robespierre, Brissot, and the Mountain, were the constant themes of panegyric and the daily toasts at table. Gov. Mifflin invited me to dine with him; Genet and his suite were there, with many others of the principal men of Philadelphia. The Governor gave for a toast,—“The ruling powers in France;—May the United States of America, in alliance with them, declare war against England.” Mifflin perceived, that I did not drink his toast, and, as I sat next to him, he whispered to me in a



friendly way, "I know I shall be too high for you, and therefore no offence will be taken if you withdraw from the company." I accordingly took French leave. Jonathan Dickenson Sargeant and Dr. Hutchinson, two old revolutionary Americans, extremely popular, put themselves at the head of the mob. Washington's house was surrounded by an innumerable multitude, from day to day, huzzaing, demanding war against England, cursing Washington, and crying success to the French patriots and virtuous republicans. Frederic A. Muhlenburg, the speaker of the house of representatives, toasted publicly,—“The Mountain, may it be a pyramid that shall reach the skies.” J. Q. Adams' writings first turned this tide; and, the yellow fever completed the salvation of Washington. Sargeant and Hutchinson died of it. I was assured soon after by some of the most sensible, substantial, and intelligent of the Quakers, that nothing but the yellow fever saved Washington from being dragged out of his house, or being compelled to declare war against England. Not all Washington's ministers, Hamilton and Pickering included, could have written those papers,



which were so fatal to Genet. Washington saw it, and felt his obligations. He took great pains to find out their author. The first notice I had, of his design to appoint my son to a mission abroad, was from his secretary of state, Randolph, who told me he had been ordered to enquire of the members of congress, and others, concerning the life and character of J. Q. Adams, and, he was, that day, to report in favour of his appointment. His correspondence with government, and with his private friends, was so universally admired, and especially by Pickering and Washington, that the latter not only felt his present obligations, but remembered the past. I will give you one proof, selected from many, in a letter from him to *me*, in these words, the original of which, all in his own hand writing, is now before me.

*Monday, Feb. 20th 1797.*

*Dear Sir,*

I thank you for giving me the perusal of the enclosed. The sentiments do honor to the head and heart of the writer;—and if my wishes would be of any avail, they should go to you in a strong hope, that you will not withhold merited promotion from Mr. John Q. Adams, because he is your son.—For without intending to



compliment the father or the mother, or to censure any others, I give it as my decided opinion, that Mr. Adams is the most valuable public character we have abroad ;—And, that there remains no doubt in my mind, that he will prove himself to be the ablest of all our diplomatic corps. If he was now to be brought into that line, or into any other public walk, I could not, upon the principle which has regulated my own conduct, disapprove of the caution, which is hinted at in the letter. But he is already entered ;—the public, more and more, as he is known, are appreciating his talents and worth ;—and his country would sustain a loss, if these were to be checked by over delicacy on your part.

With sincere esteem and affectionate regard,

I am ever yours,

GEO. WASHINGTON.

*Vice-President.*

Please to recollect who were our ambassadors abroad, at the date of that letter. The presses, in this country, are under party licences. Many pieces in honor of Mr. J. Q. Adams have been refused admittance into all the federal papers, as I have been informed.

Mr. Pickering's conscience, if it was faithful to its trust, must have suggested to him very sufficient reasons for his removal. If his memory is not decayed he may easily now recollect them.

Cæsar's wife must not be suspected, was all the reason he gave for repudiating her. Rea-



sons of state, are not always to be submitted to newspaper discussion. It is sufficient for me to say, that I had reasons enough not only to satisfy me, but to make it my indispensable duty. Reasons which upon the coolest deliberation, I still approve. I was not so ignorant of Mr. Pickering, his family relations, his political, military and local connections, as not to be well aware of the consequences to myself. I said, at the time, to a few confidential friends, that I signed my own dismissal when I signed his, and that he would rise again, but I should fall forever. The reason you heard in Philadelphia, was quite sufficient, if there had been no other, but there were many others and much stronger reasons. His removal was one of the most deliberate, virtuous and disinterested actions of my Life. If any future historian should have access to the letter books of the Secretaries of state and compare Mr. Pickering's negotiations with England, with those of his successor, Mr. Marshall, he will see reasons enough for the exchange of ministers. In consequence of Mr. Pickering's removal, I was enabled to negotiate and complete a peace with



France, and an amicable settlement with England. This is reason enough. Mr. Pickering would have made a good collector of the customs; but, he was not so well qualified for a Secretary of state. He was so devoted an Idolater of Hamilton, that he could not judge impartially of the sentiments and opinions of the President of the U. States. Look into Hamilton's Pamphlet. Observe the pretended information of things which could have only passed between me and my cabinet. False and abusive as they were, where could he pretend to have derived them? But, I am not yet to reveal the whole mystery. What I have said is to remain in your own breast. I have no disposition to enter into newspaper controversies with Pickering, or his friends or Editors.

I thank you for your observations on cider, and remain your friend and humble servant,

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. William Cunningham, Jr.  
Fitchburg.*



## LETTER XIII.

FITCHBURG, Oct. 22, 1808.

*Dear Sir,*

Anxious as I am for the due appreciation by the public of the merits of Mr. John Quincy Adams, the invaluable testimonial of President Washington, contained in your Letter of the 15th instant, could scarcely have been more gratifying to yourself than it is pleasing to me. I perceive, with much satisfaction, that the most essential parts of it may go into circulation without the least hazard to your repose—to *that* extent, I shall not consider myself interdicted in its use by the obligations I owe to the confidence you have reposed in me—I am happy in the thought, that it has been too deliberately reposed to suffer your peace to be disturbed by any fear of my indiscretion.

I am deeply sensible to your kindness in making me acquainted with many of the reasons for the dismissal of Mr. Pickering. What you have disclosed shall be inviolably kept. If by the expression “But I am not yet to reveal the whole mystery,” I am to understand your fixed resolution to make, at present, no



farther developement, I beg that I may not be suspected of attempting to change it, nor of even entertaining a curiosity to know its reasons—I will only entreat to be initiated into the whole mystery when you may deem it to be proper. But, if the disclosure is too interesting to be made but on engagements of fidelity made with more than common solemnity, you may, dear Sir, consider such an engagement as conditional to a farther communication.

With affection and respect,

I am, &c.

W<sup>M</sup>. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*



## LETTER XIV.

QUINCY, Nov. 7, 1808.

*Dear Sir,*

The Letter of General Washington would have remained in obscurity forever, as far as I know, as it has done for twelve years past, had not a mean vengeance been hurled on the subject of it, for no other offence than his sterling integrity.



You are the first person, except one, who ever asked me a question concerning the reasons for releasing a certain gentleman from the burthen of public office. That one was Barnabas Bidwell, in the violence of the tempest occasioned by the Presidential Election in 1800. Believing his curiosity to be insidious, I gave him a civil but short answer, that he was a man of too much information not to perceive the impropriety of my complying with his request. Though circumstances are now altered, I shall insist that whatever I write to you upon the subject shall be confidential as long as I live.

What is it you require of me? Nothing less than a volume, which I have neither eyes, nor hands, nor time, nor inclination to write, because it must contain the portraits of all my five ministers: of a Dayton, a Hillhouse, a Goodhue in the senate, of an Otis, a Sitgreaves, a Bayard and a Harper, and several others in the House, with a Hamilton behind the scene; of a M'Donald, a William Moore Smith, agent for British creditors, a John Ward Fenno, and a Porcupine Cobbet, and many others out of doors. I have not mentioned a Liston, nor a



Bond, because whatever their secret influence might be, they were at least discreet. The subterranean intrigues as well as the overt acts must be developed and described.

The gentleman has wreaked his revenge on my Son, in letters, which shew the character of the man, bitter and malignant, ignorant and jesuitical. His revenge has been sweet, and he has rolled it as a delicious morsel under his tongue.

Suppose I should tell you, that the studies of his early youth, and of his riper years, had not been competent to the profound investigations which his office required. We had discussions of great importance with France, England and Spain, especially the two former, involving questions respecting neutral rights, respecting British and Tory claims of anti-revolutionary debts. I could get nothing done as I would have it. My new minister, Marshall, did all, to my entire satisfaction.

Suppose I should say he was very superficially read in the law of nations—Suppose I should say he was very far from any familiar and extensive acquaintance with the laws of England,



and indeed of his own land—Who would believe me? The gentleman himself would believe me, because he is conscious of it, but he would not be likely to confess it in public. Perhaps half a dozen, or a dozen, men in the union, know it, but these would be very unwilling to testify to it. Would it be decent, would it be possible, for a President to publish such reasons, and enter into endless disputes in the newspapers to support them?

His intrigues with senators in opposition to me, and to measures I had adopted, and nominations I had made, led the senate into violations of the constitution, particularly in the nominations of Mr. Murray, Mr. Gerry and Col. Smith. His *encharnement* against Mr. Gerry, whose negotiations were more useful and successful, than those of either of his colleagues, was so furious, that he urged upon me a report containing a phillippic against Gerry as violent and outrageous as it was false and groundless. I blotted it out, but he was so angry at it, that he scarcely treated me with decency. I finally, however, admitted some expressions to pass which I am now very sorry for.



In every step of the progress of the negotiations with France he opposed, obstructed, and embarrassed me to the utmost of his power, and in some instances, with the secret aid of Hamilton, as I suppose, had the art to get all the other four of my ministers to join him.

Before I left Philadelphia, I had called together all the five heads of departments, to consult upon instructions to Mr. Ellsworth, Mr. Davie, and Mr. Murray, in their negotiations with France. We had met several days, and discussed every point in controversy. We had reasoned, and examined, and convinced one another, until we had agreed unanimously upon every article, and reduced the whole to writing,—I gave it to the Secretary of State, to reduce it into form, correct the language where it wanted any alteration, make a fair copy, and send it, as soon as possible, to me, at Quincy, for revision and correction, that I might sign the instructions to be delivered to the Envoys. Arrived at Quincy, I expected them by every post. Week after week passed away and no Instructions arrived. I was uneasy, because our Envoys ought to be upon their passage. After a



long time, instead of Instructions, came a letter to me signed by all five of the heads of departments, advising and most earnestly intreating me to suspend the embarkation of the ministers. This trifling, this negligence of duty, this downright disobedience of my orders, most seriously alarmed me. I was responsible alone to my country for measures, which I knew to be indispensable to avoid a war abroad with France, and a civil war at home, while we were involved and embroiled with England in very difficult controversies, and I could get nothing done. I very coolly, however, preserved my temper, and set off immediately for Trenton to meet my gentlemen, face to face. At Trenton I found the gentlemen had wrought themselves up to a perfect enthusiasm and delusion. They appeared to be fully convinced that the first ships would bring intelligence of the restoration of Louis the eighteenth. Suwarrow at the head of a Russian army on one side, and Prince Charles at the head of an Austrian army on the other, were to conduct Louis 18th to Paris and Versailles in splendor and triumph. I preserved my temper very happily : called my ministers



together, heard all their reasons with the utmost coolness and candour, gave my reasons and opinions in answer to theirs, and decided that the instructions should be finished and the ambassadors embarked as soon as possible, which was done, and they brought back peace abroad and at home. I found Hamilton at Trenton. He came to visit me. I said nothing to him upon politics. He began to give his advice unasked. I heard him with perfect good humour, though, never in my life, did I hear a man talk more like a fool. "The English nation had the most perfect confidence in Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Pitt was determined 'to restore the house of Bourbon,' the two imperial courts were also determined to restore the Bourbons, their armies were triumphant, Louis 18th would be in glory at Versailles before my ministers could arrive there. Offence would be taken at my sending a mission to the Directory," and twenty other wild extravagancies in the same style of dogmatical confidence. I answered every one of his topics with candour and temper, in too long a detail to be repeated here. Time has shewn that I was right and he wrong in every particular.



They had even wrought upon Mr. Ellsworth to believe that the Bourbons would be restored before winter. He and Mr. Davie, at dinner alone with me, conversing upon the subject, Ellsworth let fall an expression to that purpose, when I turned to him and said, "Mr. Ellsworth, do you seriously believe that the Bourbons will be restored so soon?" He answered, "Why: it looks a good deal so." Upon that, I said to them both, "Gentlemen, you may depend upon it, the Bourbons will not be restored these seven years, if they ever are. I request you, seven years hence to recollect what I now say to you," and I supported my opinion by a long argument drawn from the nature and history of all coalitions, from the waste of northern armies by sickness and desertion in France, from that forest of fortifications with which France is every where defended, from the property now possessed by revolutionary men, and especially from the enthusiasm and revolutionary fury that still possessed the people of France. Mr. Ellsworth, however, behaved throughout with perfect propriety and Mr. Davie was of my opinion in all points.



You shall now give me your opinion, whether I was in the wrong in giving Mr. Pickering his conge. He is, for any thing I know, a good Son, Husband, Father, Grandfather, Brother, Uncle and Cousin: but he is a man in a mask, sometimes of silk, sometimes of iron, and sometimes of brass. And he can change them very suddenly and with some dexterity, as I could shew you in many instances, though I have said little or nothing about him, till now, for nine or ten years.

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. William Cunningham.*

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## LETTER XV.

FITCHBURG, Nov. 12, 1808.

*Dear Sir,*

To my letter of the 22d ult. I have not been favoured with an answer, indeed my expectations of an answer were not confident, for in case of your disinclination to a farther disclosure concerning Mr. Pickering, the most delicate and intelligible intimation of it could be given in silence, and from that, too, I might



infer your assent to another proposition in my letter which you would not favor with your express approbation.

When the speculations, to which I have lately referred, were published, I did not take the Palladium, but since its establishment as the Government paper, I have received it. In that of last Tuesday, I see that the publication of my pieces is resumed, and from the editorial note, which is prefixed, it appears that instead of *six*, as I have informed you, the Editors, in Feb. and March, published *seven* numbers. Of my writings for the press I do not retain copies, and it was only from recollection, which had not much room to err, that I said, it was my *seventh* number which contained the matter treated by the printers as inadmissible. If in the insertion of my numbers, they have been numerally correct, they suppressed, in the *seventh*, my encomiums on Mr. John Q. Adams.— But, with their files before them, to what inference are they liable, if they have not printed a word of that number? I should not hazard a question so pointed at their veracity, and solvable by turning over a few leaves, if I had not



the most entire confidence, that not a single line of it has appeared in print.

I commenced the papers with the design I have communicated to you—I expected it would hold me to the full length of “Discourses on Davila,” incapable of their imitation in any other particular. Frustrated, in part, I am embarrassed with a doubt, whether the prosecution of my plan will answer any valuable purpose. I take the liberty to enclose the Palladium which contains number eight.

Permit me, dear sir, to renew through you, my respects to Mrs. Adams, and your family.

With veneration and esteem,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

*Quincy, Ms.*

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## LETTER XVI.

FITCHBURG, Nov. 16, 1808.

*Dear Sir,*

The person who carried to the office the letter which I had the pleasure to write



you the 12th inst. brought me yours of the 9th. You may depend, most assuredly, that your disclosures concerning the *ci-devant* secretary shall not be divulged while you live, and may the day be distant which shall discharge me to my discretion in the use of the important matter you have deposited in my bosom.

The answer which you demand on the question, you have referred to my opinion, I give, without hesitation, in the affirmative. I ask myself, what would have been done in such a case by any other person, conscious of his competency to the duties of his high station, and alive to the responsibility in which it was holden by his country? What, for instance, would have been done by Cicero? What by the Earl of Chatham? But, if for your conduct, there was required the authority of precedent, it was furnished by your predecessor in his treatment of Randolph, and in his answer to the call of the house of representatives for the papers in the case of the British treaty. Of what avail to the nation is the responsibility of the first officer in the republic, if his schemes, constitutionally sanctioned, can be frustrated by his servants?



And where is his regard to his honor, his dignity and the interests of his country, if under the most flagrant instances of their misdemeanour, he will forbear the exercise of his authority over their stations ?

With affection and esteem,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

• *Hon. John Adams.*

*Quincy, Mass.*

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## LETTER XVII.

QUINCY, Nov. 25, 1808.

*Dear Sir,*

I have your favours of the 12th and 16th of the month. The letter of President Washington concerning John Q. Adams is at your discretion, to make what use of it, you please. All the communications concerning the other gentlemen made, or to be made, I confide to your sacred confidence. The great regard I had for your grandfather, and for your grandmother, who was a beloved sister of my mother, and for your father, have induced me, especially



as you was the first, and the only person, who ever *candidly* asked me the question, to commit to you a few hints concerning a subject on which I have been silent for so many years. As, against all the vile slanders, which have been published, I have never said or written a word in my own vindication, I am not about to begin, by a justification of myself for one of the most virtuous actions of my life. If my actions have not been sufficient to support my fame, let it perish. No higher ambition remains with me than to build a tomb upon the summit of the hill before my door, covered with a six foot cube of Quincy Granite, with an inscription like this,

Siste Viator !

With much delight these pleasing hills you view,  
Where Adams from an envious world withdrew,  
Where sick of glory, faction, power and pride,  
Sure judge how empty all, who all had tried,  
Beneath his shades the weary chief repos'd,  
And life's great scene in quiet virtue clos'd.

To return to the famous gentleman. He is extremely susceptible of violent and inveterate prejudices ; and yet, such are the contradictions to be found in human characters, he is capable of very sudden and violent transitions from one.



extreme to an opposite extreme. Under the simple appearance of a bald head and straight hair, and under professions of profound republicanism, he conceals an ardent ambition, envious of every superior, and impatient of obscurity. I always think of a coal-pit, covered over with red earth, glowing within, but unable to conceal its internal heat, for the interstices which let out the smoke, and now and then a flash of flame. He has been several years in Senate, but so totally obscure and insignificant, as to keep him in an agony. Almost always in a minority of two, three, four or five, in thirty-four, rarely saying any thing that has been worth reporting, he broke out at last in a rage, and threw a firebrand into our Massachusetts Legislature against his colleague. The stubble was dry and the flame easily took hold. He has an hereditary right to this distinction; I mean a strong desire of celebrity, with feeble means of obtaining it. If ever you should see the Salem newspapers, published forty or fifty years ago, you will find them abounding with the writings of the good Deacon, his father, in vindication of the rights and prerogatives of the



first church in Salem. He became so emboldened by the noise he made, that he wrote and published several letters to the king, subscribed with his name. One part of the public was amused, another diverted, and a third fatigued with his ostentatious vanity for some years.— Some thirty-five or thirty-six years ago, I was engaged in a cause at Salem court, in which the deacon was a witness. While he was under examination, though I treated him with the utmost respect and civility, he broke out, without the smallest provocation into a rude personal attack upon me. I was then, as a son of Liberty, obnoxious to the Judges, to the government, to the British ministry, and to the king. Though I was astonished at the deacon's manners, I took no notice of them, till I came to examine his testimony in my argument to the jury. I then said I could not account for his unprovoked animosity to me, an entire stranger to him, unless he meant to recommend himself to somebody to whom I was obnoxious, and I should not be surprised, if in his next letter to the king, he should do me the honour to denounce me to his majesty. This little sally raised a general laugh



at the deacon's expense, and, as I suppose the son was present, he has never forgiven me.—The concatenation of little and great events in this world is often very whimsical and very ridiculous.

Have you never seen the son's speech to the Indians in 1794, or thereabouts? If you have not I may send you a copy of it. Great light may be thrown upon his character by this document. No man I ever knew had so deep a contempt for Washington. I have had numerous proofs of it from his own lips: yet, he appears to the world a devout adorer of him. No man was a more animated advocate for the French; yet, now he is as zealous for the English. But enough of this unpleasant subject.

I thank you for the two numbers of Chatham, which discover a good deal of reading and reflection. Have you read Bruce's Travels into Abyssinia in search of the source of the Nile? You will find in the second volume much learning concerning David's commerce with Ophir and Tarshish in gold and silver, &c.

I am, &c. JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. William Cunningham, Jr.—Fitchburg.*



# LETTER XVIII.

FITCHBURG, *Dec. 3, 1808.*

*Dear Sir,*

Your favour of the 25th ult. came duly to hand. What you have already confided to me concerning Mr. Pickering, and what more you may have the goodness to disclose I shall not impart to any one. I repeat this assurance to relieve the solicitude which I perceive you cherish to have me sensibly impressed with the delicacy and importance of the communications with which you have honoured me.

I hope, dear sir, that when the great acts of your life shall be told in marble, your countrymen will recover that just estimation of your worth which shall consecrate in their hearts, through every convulsive scene, the spot of your interment. I have a voucher in the majesty of virtue, and in apposite examples, for asserting that it will be so.

I will get, if I can, the Salem Gazettes, containing the anathemas of deacon P. In the old block I may see the nature of the chip.

Of the speech of the "straight-haired" minis-



ter Plenipotentiary to the Indians, I have only some indistinct recollections. I would be much obliged to you for a copy of it—I shall strictly analyze its bearings on the orator's character.—His contempt of Washington, and advocacy of French fanaticism are facts which, unfortunately, are unknown to the public. I wish my suspicions were obviated or confirmed, that his far-famed Report to Congress, on our Foreign Relations, was not his own unassisted performance. It is due to the deservedly laurelled head, that the baldness, concealed under a cardinal's hat, should be exposed.

I thank you for the reference to Bruce's Travels. I have some extracts from his books, but I have not the work itself. I am not unacquainted with, though I do not own, a work of much higher worth; but I know not how to speak of the "Defence of the American Constitutions," without your taking an intimation that you can make me indebted for more than the perusal of it.

When Young and Minns resumed the publication of Chatham, they tendered me their press as a channel of communication to the public of



my essays. Presuming that this offer would hold them, I concluded to write a few more papers, and to incorporate into one of them, some notices of Mr. John Q. Adams. To this I was induced by seeing the declination of Mr. Clinton to serve as Vice-President—And as the Electors, on the popular side, must make a selection of another for that office, I thought it would be neither impolitic, nor too late, to bring Mr. Adams into view, through a federal paper. Accordingly in number thirteen, I have spoken of him at some length. The papers containing numbers ten and eleven I send herewith.

With veneration and esteem,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams,  
Quincy.*

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## LETTER XIX.

FITCHBURG, Dec. 10, 1808.

*Dear Sir,*

I had the pleasure to write you the 3d inst. I follow it with this to make the ex-



planation of the concluding part of that letter, which subsequent discoveries have made necessary. I mentioned a particular object as my inducement to a public notice of Mr. John Q. Adams, in the thirteenth number of certain speculations, but it appears, that the occasion I intended to influence has gone by in advance of my efforts. But this was not owing to any delinquency in my endeavours. The paper was received by the printers on the 10th Nov. and if they had not intermitted the publication of the numbers, the number thirteen would have appeared on Friday the 22d of last month.— That it did not appear on that day, I indeed knew at the date of my last; but the omission of a number in the Palladium of that day week, was unknown to me. The letters I prepare for the mail are written on post days, and I very frequently meet with matter in the letters or papers I receive, which affect the contents of the letters I had sent to the office. This was the case when I forwarded my last to you. I found that the regular appearance of my papers had been interrupted, and that the number thirteen could not appear until the 6th instant.—



Whether the editors neglected me on that day on purpose to defeat my views, I leave to conjecture. It is to wear away some of the chagrin their conduct has caused, that I make this elucidation. As it respects Mr. Adams, the omission of the paper will be of little consequence, even though its appearance could have effected all I wished. I designated him for the office Mr Madison will be called to vacate. If what I have sent to the press concerning Mr. Adams should appear, or has appeared, and it should be thought to be composed in more candour than craftiness, I shall feel complimented, rather than wounded, by the opinion. My well meant attempts to serve him have been directed as much by my sense of duty to my country, as by the obligation of private friendship; and I am persuaded that I never shall have occasion to apologise to him for what the union of these governing rules of reflection may suggest respecting him.

I have hopes of being favoured this evening with the talk of Mr. Pickering.

With affection and respect, I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*



## LETTER XX.

FITCHBURG, Dec. 17, 1808.

*Dear Sir,*

Since I enjoyed the pleasure of addressing you on the 10th inst. I have seen two numbers of the Palladium, and found them both silent respecting Mr. John Q. Adams. Doubtful whether the editors would publish my encomium on him, I retained a copy which is subjoined, and which shall release your patience from any further tax on that subject.

[Here follows a quotation from Chatham No. XIII. written in an abbreviated or short hand, peculiar to the author, which cannot be decyphered by the editor.]

I see it asserted in the Boston papers, that the democratic editors will vote for Mr. Clinton for Vice-President. In the New-York Evening Post, of an early date in November, I saw an article formally announcing that he declined being a candidate for that office. I may have admitted it too hastily from an impression long before imbibed, that he would not serve in that station.

Mrs. Warren, in her History of the Revolution, vol. II, page 207, has given in a note, a



sketch of the character of Count De Vergennes, drawn, I presume, by your pen. Before the appearance of this History, I had publicly coupled the venality of Vergennes and the obsequiousness of his American vassals, to explain the cause of an intermission in your Diplomatic career. I am covetous of the information which will enable me to fortify this explanation with the direct proofs of his being visionary, and of his destitution of moral worth. Mrs. Warren had amassed much information, and where she has confined herself to plain narration she appears very well. In the difficult undertaking of portraying characters she has betrayed her own incapacity, though it must be acknowledged, that she has not been unhappy in her delineations in the instances which did not require a deep investigation. She is the most unfortunate when she assumes the umpirage of political division.

With veneration, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*



## LETTER XXI.

QUINCY, Dec. 13th, 1808.

*Dear Sir,*

Your favours of the 3d and 10th are received. The 2d and 3d volumes of the Defence are at your service, provided I had any means of conveyance for them. But the first volume is not in my power, having none that I can spare. An edition of the first was printed in Boston, perhaps some copies of it remain there: but I know nothing of it. I laughed when I read your expectation that what you had written on John Quincy Adams, would be printed. I found that you was not acquainted with the world as it exists in Boston. The four federal papers are under the *Imprimatur* of an oligarchy of purse proud speculators, as despotic as the thirty tyrants of Athens. Trials enough have been made, as I have been informed, to insert many things on the same subject, and refused. You will destroy all your credit if you persevere in such attempts. Banks and other vile pranks, have thrown the majority into the hands of those, who were shapen in to-ryism, and, in British idolatry, did their moth-



ers conceive them. Beware then how you offend this irritable race of refugees. Whatever friendship you may have retained for John Quincy Adams, or his Father, I advise you to conceal it close within your own breast. If it takes air it will ruin your prospects.

I have been too much occupied with other things to think of the wise man of Salem :\* Time enough. Be patient. Your designation of Mr. John Quincy Adams, to the office Mr. Madison now holds, will be as erroneous, as the other to that of Vice President. Mr. Giles, Mr. Munroe, Mr. Pope, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. twenty others will be more likely. No ! Mr. Adams must be left where he is. He is now at his ease and is happy, and useful, more use-

*\* The following note, in the hand writing of Mr. Cunningham, is annexed to the original letter from Mr. Adams.*

One of the things in which Mr. Adams was at this time engaged, was his remarks on Col. Pickering's Letter to Gov. Sullivan, of the 16th Feb. 1807. And, this is the first letter in the correspondence with me, in which Mr. Adams has given reins to the impatient spirit of a controvertist. The gentleman, described in a former letter, as too faulty to succeed in a competition with Gov. Strong, "*unless the people should degenerate,*" is now "*lamented as the last of the whigs !*"



ful perhaps than he could be in any other public station in these times of anarchy, violence and fury. No! The old whigs and their posterity must all go into obscurity, and all the public offices must be monopolised by the blood of the old refugees. Mr. Gore, the son of one refugee must be Governor, Mr. Pickman, a son of another refugee, must be a member of Congress from the old tory county of Salem. Mr. Edward Hutchinson Robbins, a nephew of the sovereign Pontiff of toryism, must be a Counsellor and member of Congress. Mr. Lloyd, the son of another tory, as orthodox as any of the refugees, must be a Senator, &c. &c. &c. The old Whigs, dead or living, will soon be in sufficient obscurity, and the Revolution in sufficient disgrace. The whigs had been reduced to the necessity of choosing Mr. Sullivan. He is now departed and probably will be the last of the whigs. The tories I suppose are sanguine that they shall have Mr. Gore in the spring. There seems to be among them however some suspicions that they are not secure in this hope. I conclude so, because I hear, that among them, other persons are contemplated. Mr. Gray of



Salem has been mentioned, and Mr. Parker, the Judge of the Supreme Court. This gentleman is said to be in high esteem and admiration in the District of Maine, where the election has been sometimes decided. In Worcester, Hampshire and Berkshire, I expect to hear that Mr. Sedgwick will be nominated, unless they should return to my old friend, Governor Strong. The Republicans, no doubt, will adhere to Mr. Lincoln. Both parties however will be directed by their Caucuses, which are established by custom as part of the Constitution, as much as party principles are or party intolerance. *I may mention to you in confidence, that considerable pains has been taken to persuade your friend John Q. Adams to consent to be run by the republicans. But he is utterly averse to it,* and so am I, for many reasons, among which are 1st The office, though a precious stone, is but a carbuncle shining in the dark. 2d It is a state of perfect slavery. The drudgery of it is extremely oppressive. 3d The Compensation is not a living for a common gentleman. 4th He must resign his professorship. 5th He must renounce his practice at the Bar. 6th He



must stand in competition with Mr. Lincoln, which would divide the republican interest and certainly prevent the election of either. 7th It would produce an eternal separation between him and the federalists, at least that part of them who now constitute the absolute Oligarchy. This I own, however, I should not much regret, for this nation has more to fear from them than any other source. 8th Finally, and above all, there is as little prospect of doing any good as acquiring any honour or receiving any comfort. For these reasons, I am decidedly against the project, and so is he. Private station, in my opinion, has no equal for him. Be so good as to tell me who are in nomination in your neighbourhood.

I am as usual,

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. William Cunningham.*

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## LETTER XXII.

FITCHBURG, Dec. 21, 1808.

*Dear Sir,*

I have received your favour of the 13th inst. and give you my thanks for the offer



of the 2d and 3d volumes of the Defence. If you would be at the trouble of putting them under a blank cover, superscribed with my address, and cause them to be left at Mr. Wheelock's, at the sign of the Indian Queen in Marlborough street, they will be brought to me by the driver of the Leominster stage. I shall be unsusceptible of instruction if experience, much longer protracted, shall fail to convince me of an Oligarchic oversight of the federal presses.

Your advice to imprison in my bosom the friendship I feel for yourself and family, is entitled to all the gratitude which is due to a kind and generous intention, but its observance is impracticable.

I happened to be at the first Court in Worcester which was holden after the acquittal of Mr. Selfridge. There I was told by Mr. Speaker Bigelow, and others, that I was accused of having apostatized from federalism. I informed them, that if the expression of my firm conviction that Selfridge had been guilty of murder, and ought to have been hanged, was the sole ground of the accusation, and if that was enough to constitute a secession from fed-



eralism, I wished to be considered as seceding. But I was not ejected. The great political parties in the State, arranged under their respective standards on the simple question of the guilt or innocence of an individual under a criminal accusation, was a curious spectacle. I am thoroughly persuaded of the power of prejudice. Through the heat of party feuds she sits in regal pomp, in the human breast, dictating most despotically, its decisions. But this heat must subside, and the tranquil scene succeed, when reason shall be reinstated in her government.

With veneration and esteem,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

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## LETTER XXIII.

QUINCY, Jan. 3, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

I have your favours of December 17, and 21st. I hope you will not insinuate a comparison between John Q. Adams and Corio-



lanus. Whatever injustice or ingratitude may be done him, he has none of the Roman's revenge, much less his treachery.

Of Mrs. Warren's History I have nothing to say. The Count De Vergennes was an accomplished gentleman and scholar, and a statesman of great experience in various diplomatic and other ministerial stations. In treating with other nations, he considered the interest of his own country and left others to take care of theirs. His refinements were not invisible. His negotiations were very like those of the British Cabinet with us at this day. All I have to say is, that all European Cabinets and Ministers are very much alike: and our only security against them is in our own fortitude and the sense and integrity of our own Ministers. Have you seen any wondrous skill in our foreign Ambassadors for some years past?

I have sent to the Indian Queen the 2d and 3d vols. of a work which the English editor of the 2d edition calls an History of Republicks. It may be called *The American Boudoir*. What is a Boudoir? It is a *Pouting room*. And what is a Pouting room? In many gentlemen's



houses in France, there is an apartment, of an octagonal form, twelve or fifteen feet across, or thirty six or forty-five feet round, and all the eight sides, as well as the ceiling over head, are all of the most polished glass Mirrors: so that, when a man stands in the centre of the room he sees himself in every direction, multiplied into a row of selfs, as far as the eye can reach.

The humour of it is, that when the lady of the house is out of temper, when she is angry, or when she weeps without a cause, she may be locked up in this chamber to pout, and to see in every direction how beautiful she is. There are settees and chairs round the sides and commonly a bath in the centre, which may be made hot or cold. So that persons may see themselves naked in every posture. Such a Boudoir is the Defence. Our States may see themselves in it, in every possible light, attitude and movement. They may see all their beauties and all their deformities. Happy they who are made cautious by others' dangers!

I return the editor's letter, which, with a thousand other things, concurs to show that cer-



tain presses are under the controul of an aristocracy of bankers led by the nose by an oligarchy of Shylocks, all sycophants to Britain. A happy new year.

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. Wm. Cunningham,*

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### LETTER XXIV.

FITCHBURG, Jan. 14, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

I received, on the last day of December, the 2d and 3d volumes of the Defence, for which I renew my thanks. You have truly characterized this work in the comparison you have made of it, in your letter of the 3d inst. to a Boudoir. Many of the evils which you have described as incident to an unbalanced government, we have found by experience to have been insufficiently guarded against by our Constitution. A paragraph in the 3d vol. page 460, beginning with—"It is the true policy," and ending with "constitution," I have placed with my materials for elucidating an occurrence in the life of an Ex-Secretary, which



he and his friends would keep shrouded, or have explained to your disadvantage.

The comparison of Mr. John Q. Adams to Coriolanus, was, as you doubtless supposed, an inadvertence. I had in my mind the story of Camillus, but erred in its application. In a fugitive essay, allusions are seldom attempted in the accuracy of Plutarch's parallels. If they hold in one or two striking particulars, they answer. An important point, in the resemblance to the Roman, is, and, I think not unaptly, anticipated.—Mr. Adams may interpose and save his country, and not lose a likeness of Camillus should he do it in the Toga, not the Helmet. My memory is oftentimes the only registry to which I can appeal: a habit of confiding to its records betrays me into mistakes.

Our foreign Ministers have not, I think, of late been prodigies. Mr. Bowdoin (to whom, by the way, I understand that the Republicans have offered the Chair) made no figure. His mind and his constitution were too far vitiated in the old school of Europe, where he was sent to finish his education, to permit him ever to appear rich in the inheritance of his Father's



worth and wisdom. Mr. Pinckney, in the game of cat-in-pan, is making himself contemptible. Lethe would be better for Armstrong than the water of Bourbon D'Archambault.

My Chathams are nearly all published. If they attract your curiosity, you can gratify it long before the papers can reach you so circuitously as through me. In No. XV. the editors omitted a paragraph, for which they have asked pardon, in the body of the piece. The part omitted was to this purport:—

“But that Great Britain should do more than maintain herself against her adversary, I have the same objections as to her being expunged from the catalogue of nations. Her security may require a new modification of the European economy, but it asks nothing personally relating to the Bourbons or the Buonapartes. That a bone of contention might be mouldered into dust, I wish, indeed, that the hopes of the Bourbons, as they relate to France, were extinct. I can see nothing in policy, in principle, or in justice, to require, but every thing in humanity, to deplore their being reinstated on the Gallic Throne. And, I will not dissemble, that



I have no such elevated conceptions of British magnanimity as to overcome the jealousy of the most overbearing atrocities towards us, could she reign mistress of her neighbours. We have had too much experience on this head to be unconvinced, that the reassumption of her former power and splendour, would occasionally subject us to an inconvenient employment of force to moderate her domineering temper."

The Liberty of the Press!

According to the last advices, it appears that Buonaparte will make as short work with Castenos as Cæsar did with Pharnaces, and may describe his victory in the same terms.

It was with much regret that I saw in the papers of this week, some account of a *letter from you to a Member of Congress*. A Chronicle of last week gave a summary account of its contents. From the tenor of the letters with which you have honoured me, I conclude, that your correspondent has rendered himself undeserving of your confidence. I am informed that the letter is much a topic at Boston, and has given rise to free animadversion. It is an arduous duty of friendship to give you this in-



formation, but it will not, for that, be the less acceptable.

The gratulations of the season I most sincerely reciprocate to yourself, and tender to your Family.

With veneration and affection,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

## LETTER XXV.

FITCHBURG, Jan. 11, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

The last letter, which I had the honour to receive from you, dated January 3d, I have before acknowledged. Permit me to remind you, that I have in expectation something farther from you, concerning the misnamed Aristides.

I am perfectly ashamed to speak to you again of my Chathams, but it is unavoidable. The three concluding numbers, the printers refuse to publish. In two of them I had embodied the reasons which had occurred to me in favour of



substituting for the Embargo, a license to merchant ships, to arm against aggressors indiscriminately, and I gave many reasons against giving to our resentments a partial direction.

The determination of the Essex Junto to drive this country into a war with France, and of another party to effect hostilities exclusively with England, are, in my opinion, alike inauspicious to our peace and prosperity. With this impression, I reject the Report of Mr. Gore to the House of Representatives. Considering the temper of the times, an arming against violators of our rights, without distinction, is, it appears to me, the only defence of them, we can engage in, whole bodied; in any other, we shall be lacerated with our own stripes. And does not justice combine with policy in favour of indiscriminate resistance?

The papers announce that Mr. John Q. Adams is at Washington. I shall be disappointed if his rare talents and incorruptible integrity are permitted a long respite from public occupation.

With veneration and affection,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*



## LETTER XXVI.

QUINCY, *Feb.* 11, 1809.*Dear Sir,*

I have your favour of the 14th, ult. The Mirror was never read—and if it ever should be it will be wilfully misunderstood. Seventeen wheels within one wheel, seventeen empires within one empire, seventeen sovereignties within one sovereignty, seventeen *imperia* in one *imperio*, will tell in time. We have had a Shays' disturbance, a Gallatin's disturbance, a Tories' disturbance, and why may we not have a Pickering's disturbance? Such, I think, is the spirit of the reasoning of the present times.

Whether the Republicans have offered the Chair to Mr. Bowdoin, or not, I know not. They talk of this, that, and the other Gentleman, but all will depend upon the Caucus in the Legislature, and that, I presume, will determine on Mr. Lincoln. The Federalists too talk of many candidates, as Gov. Strong, Judge Parker, and many others, but their Caucus is pledged to Mr. Gore and they cannot abandon him. The question will be between Lincoln and Gore.



Your rejected paragraph concerning Great Britain was high treason against the present domineering party. But it is sound sense and true policy. It is not wonderful that *some* persons among us are so eager to rush into the arms of Great Britain. But it is unaccountable, that there should be so many. Common understanding one would think sufficient, when enlightened with an ordinary knowledge of mankind and the general history of England and America, to convince any man that Great Britain is the natural enemy of the United States. She has looked at us from our first settlement to this moment, with eyes of jealousy, envy, hatred and contempt. At this time she knows not how to do without us. She makes a great profit of us. Yet she sees that we make a profit too, and that we grow faster than she does. Our population, wealth, power, and importance, with all nations, increases incomparably more rapid than hers. This prospect she cannot bear. She sees too, that this is the only rising country of the world, and that the American people are the most active portion of the human race, especially the New-England States,



For us then to quarrel with all other nations for the sake of courting the protection of Great Britain, is as if the lamb should fly from its friendly flock and faithful shepherd, and seek the friendship and protection of the wolf. All the nations of Europe, to my knowledge, are friendly to us. If the French are now an exception it is owing to the war with England, and the singular character of their present Ruler.

Buonaparte I think, at least I hope, will not find so easy a conquest of the Spaniards. The English will make sure of the Spanish Navy, and secure their own retreat on board their ships. I hope however they will come in contact with the French. If they should, though they may be overpowered by numbers, they will give the French something to remember. Bona will not have to say *veni, vidi, vici*. Britons are at least as brave and more patient than the French.

Regret nothing that you see in the papers concerning me. It is impossible that newspapers can say the truth. They would be out of their element.—I regard them no more than the gossamer that idles in the wanton summer air.



When you told me that my letter had been a topic in Boston, and given rise to free animadversion, you should have told me what those animadversions were. We should never tell a man that he has been slandered without informing him what those slanders were.

I have a few sheets of paper written on a point on which I differed formerly and latterly with our angry Senator, and which was one of the causes of his removal, which I will send you provided you will previously give me your honour that you will return it after you have read it without taking any copy.

I am, &c.

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. Cunningham.*

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## LETTER XXVII.

QUINCY, *Feb.* 14, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

The complaint in your favour of the 11th, of the refusal to publish your Chathams is no surprise to me. I have seen nothing in the four Federal papers of Boston for the last year,



but such another prostitution of genius, learning, and eloquence as we read in Madam Draper's, Fleet's, and Mein and Fleming's, Papers in 1773 and 1774. A blind devotion to England and a disposition to sacrifice to her, our rights and a headlong inclination to go to war with France, and for the sake of these *blessings* to hazard if not sacrifice the Union and Constitution of the United States. Not one of those papers will publish a word inconsistent with that system.

I agree with you in the system of armed neutrality at first. It will take time to try that experiment, and time gained is precious.

I have a letter to-day from John Q. Adams at Washington on the sixth of the month. He arrived in time for the session of the Supreme Court, before which he has a good deal of better business than debating in Congress. If his talents and integrity continue to be neglected, as they have been insulted, it is not his fault, and I have the consolation to know that it is more for his interest and the peace of his mind, than any public office would be. If he were in the Senate of Massachusetts he could only labour in vain with his friend Mr. Gray to prevent



our Legislature from overleaping the boundaries of our Constitution.

When John Wilkes was writing one of his North Britons, he said to one of his friends, who came in suddenly upon him, "I have been studying these four hours to see how near I could come in my next North Briton to treason, without committing it." The deliberations and debates of our two Houses, appear to me to be somewhat like a hard study to come as near violating the Constitution as possible without breaking it.

Our respectable Metropolis is too warm and it has communicated too much of its heat to some other places which are too much under its influence.

I inclose you a Frederick Town Herald of January 14th, in which you may read a philippick of Mr. John Hanson Thomas upon the City of Baltimore. What would be said, if such an oration were made in the Chronicle, or in our House of Representatives concerning our modest City of Boston.

I am Sir, as usual,

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. Cunningham.*



## LETTER XXVIII.

FITCHBURG, *Feb.* 20, 1809.*Dear Sir,*

Your favours of the 11th and 14th inst. came both to hand to-day. I have only time, by this mail, to make the acknowledgment, and to request of you the goodness to send me what you have written on a point controverted between yourself and the person whose pertinacity you have found so unmanageable.

The engagements, on my part, which you have proposed as conditional to its reception, I most freely and unreservedly make.

With esteem and veneration,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

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## LETTER XXIX.

FITCHBURG, *Feb.* 23, 1809.*Dear Sir,*

I wrote you under the date of the 20th inst. and sent it to the Post office, but ar-



riving there a few minutes too late to be forwarded by the mail, it was returned. I now forward it under cover with this. There is a sentence in your favour of the 11th, demanding my particular attention. "*When you told me*" you observe "*that my letter had been a topick at Boston, and given rise to free animadversion, you should have told me what those animadversions were.*" I instantly thought of the story of Le Fever—" *When thou offeredst him whatever was in my house, thou shouldst have offered him my house too.*" But in the animadversions referred to, there is a counterpart, not a likeness to the conduct of "my uncle Toby."—In the censure of you, sir, there is the reverse of sentiment. An entire conviction of this and the certainty of your own consciousness of it, ought perhaps to have restrained me from making the communication I did; yet if the littleness which is striving at aggrandizement through the representation that any of your opinions are dictated by private pique towards Pickering and his party, is regarded by you, as it deserves to be, undeserving of notice as the prattling of a magpie, it will, I trust, afford you some conso-



lation to know, that you have friends, who, founding their estimation of your character upon an intimate acquaintance with it, view with derision, or with indignation, the bows exercised by malicious hands in hurling arrows which fall pointless by your side. If in this explanation, and to any extent, I have administered this consolation, I shall the less lament the unguardedness which, in leaving undefined a calumny, might to some have given occasion for disquieting apprehensions.

I thank you for the Frederick Town Herald. For the sake of Mr. Kettering's antidote to canine madness, which that paper contains, I ask your leave to keep it.

Our peace and security may be as much jeopardized in the intemperate warmth of Boston as in the frantic licentiousness of Baltimore. To both, the adage is applicable. *Ne sutor ultra crepidam.*

With affection and respect,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*



## LETTER XXX.

QUINCY, *Feb. 22, 1809.**Dear Sir,*

Inclosed you will find a philippic of our angry, peevish, fretful Prophet Jonah. His anger is his talent. When he gives a loose to that passion, as he always does in every thing, he produces something smart, pert and malignant which pleases the malignity of the vulgar. But philippics are not the highest style of politics. I cannot think Demosthenes and Cicero in the highest grade of Statesmen, though they certainly were of Orators.

You will see how ardently he was attached to the French, even to the highest strain of Jacobinism, and king killing. Compare this with his present ardent attachment to the English, and see how the same temper can swing the extremest vibrations of the pendulum.

From Jonah let me turn to Harlequin. Have you read Matthew Lyon's letter to his friend in Vermont? The mixture of monk and monkey in this fellow creature of ours, always diverts me, like a medicine for the spleen, or a cordial for low spirits. I shall not examine his system.



As far as it is intelligible he is for repealing all Embargoes, Non-Intercourses, and Non-Importations, and surrendering all pretensions to rights. I suspect he is one of the little merchants he mentions, not one of the big, by any means, and, that his little *paquetilles* are somewhat deranged and in danger. The sum of what he says in one place, is, that the vulgar among the Federalists adored John Adams and the vulgar among the Republicans adore Tom Jefferson. "When John Adams said that the finger of heaven pointed to war, you and I laughed at him." This may be true: but it was the grinning of idiots at each other—the laughter of fools, the crackling of thorns under a pot. He is so great a worshipper and idolator of Tom Paine, that he and his correspondent might believe that there is no Heaven, or that Heaven has no finger. If he believed in a God and a Providence, and had eyes in his head or brains in his skull, he might have seen and would have seriously considered that the course of events had rendered a war, or indelible disgrace and national degradation, unavoidable. He must have seen that Providence did indicate war, and



ordain war ; for, a war we had in fact, a war declared in form by the House of Representatives, the Senate and President of the United States. It was not a universal war : it was defined and limited to certain cases : but a declaration of a Sovereign that a solemn and vastly important treaty between him and another sovereign is null and void, by the infractions, violence, injustice and breach of faith by that other, is tantamount to a declaration of war. But Congress went farther ; they raised forces by land and sea, and authorized hostilities, and a war was actually waged. A glorious and triumphant war it was. Instead of hearing of vessels taken in our rivers and burnt in our harbours, as we had done for a long time, not an hostile sail dared to spread itself on any part of our vast sea-coast. Instead of our merchant ships being taken by scores, and our property captivated by millions in the West-Indies, Talbot, Truxton, Decatur and Little cleared the whole seas, and not a privateer or picaroon or even frigate dared shew its head. The Proud Pavillion of France was, in many glaring instances, humiliated under the eagles and stripes of the United States. But



the greatest triumph of all, was, that the haughty Directory, who had demanded tribute, refused to receive our Ambassadors, and formally and publicly, by an act of Government, declared that they would not receive any more Ministers from the United States, till I had made excuses and apologies for some of my speeches, were obliged to humble themselves, retract all their declarations and transmit to me the most positive assurances in several various ways both official and inofficial that they would receive my Ministers, and make peace on my own terms.

Let the jackasses, Lyon and his correspondent, and his intimate friends, Duane, Callender and Tom Paine, bray or laugh at all this, as they did at the finger of God. If ever an Historian should arise fit for the investigation, this transaction must be transmitted to posterity as the most glorious period in American History, and as the most disinterested, prudent, and successful conduct in my whole life. For I was obliged to give peace and unexampled prosperity to my country for eight years, and, if it is not for a longer duration, it is not



my fault, against the advice, intreaties, and intrigues of all my Ministers, and all the leading Federalists in both houses of Congress.

The two factions have conspired hitherto to smother all my glory : yet, they cannot avoid letting out, now and then, a glimpse, and this letter of Lyon's is one instance of it.

Our parties at present resemble two ladies of easy virtue, in whose quarrels and scoldings, one reproaches the other with her weakness with a lover the last night, and the other retorts, you are worse than I, for, you committed adultery the night before and put horns upon your husband. Unfortunately there is too much truth in both. Neither party, however, in the violence of their rage can avoid throwing out something now and then in honour of

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. Cunningham.*

P. S. The Caitiff says I repented. This is false. I had nothing to repent of. I departed from no principle, system, or profession. The French Government repented and reformed. Their humiliation and my triumph were complete: Both struck the British Ambassador so



forcibly that he said to me "To what degrees of abasement will not the French submit to you? I was in hopes they would have persevered and gone to war with you."

My system was from the beginning, to make peace with them the moment I could do it consistently with the honour and interest of the nation. But this disappointed the Anglomaniac Federalists as well as Mr. Liston, and they have hated me for it ever since. J. A.

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### LETTER XXXI.

FITCHBURG, *March* 11, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

On the first of the month, I received your favour of the 22d ult. with a copy of a speech of a *ci-devant* Minister to the six Nations. Having been ill with the prevailing influenza, and expecting, mail after mail, to receive your answer to my letters of the 20th and 23d of February, I have delayed this acknowledgement. I hope that this evening will relieve my impatience to see the speculations you have written in opposition to the opinions



of an officer whose duty it was to facilitate, but whose contumacy embarrassed your Administration.

I had seen Lyon's Letter, and had waded through it. When I turn to the journals of '98, and compare the treatment of him then with the estimation of him now, I think of a belle who, in the pride of accomplishments, casts her eye fastidiously upon a worthless fellow, but who, when past her prime, 'oversteps the modesty of nature' in her forwardness to encourage his advances.—'Tis a mortifying meanness! Lyon has been called a beast, but the most I could ever make of him was a chattering pianet. *Noscitur ex sociis.*

Your view of our situation in 1798 is fully substantiated by public documents. So glorious a result of the measures then pursued, ought to have settled them forever in the Cabinet, and in the bosom of every American, as the *only* measures, designated by Heaven and consecrated by experience, for the maintenance of our maritime rights. The fortunate issue, sir, of these measures to your own fame, is a subject, with which I am too full not to fear to



speak to *you* and confine myself within allowable limits. The reduction of Directorial *hauteur* to a compliance with your own conditions, was a conquest which no other cabinet can boast. Your declaration in your Message to Congress of June 21, '98, that you "would not send another Minister to France, without assurances that he would be received, respected and honoured as the representative of a great, free, powerful, and independent nation," committed you, as to the terms upon which a new mission would be instituted. I derive the highest satisfaction from the direct information, that the Directory transmitted to you "the most positive assurances in various ways, both official and inofficial, that they would receive your Ministers, and make peace on your own terms." You know it, sir, to have been alleged, that of a relaxation in the tone of the Directory, you had nothing but informal intimations, circuitously passed to you through Mr. Murray, and of too vague a character to release you from your engagement in your Message. To what distortions will not a phrenzied party descend! The concessions on the part of the executive of France, which abat-



ed, if but for a moment, the Hotsperian temper of the British minister, were unquestionably such as ought effectually to have appeased the just indignation of the American President. The confessions of Mr. Liston, that the submission of the Directory had banished his hopes of a war, is the more *precious* for being unwillingly yielded. If his understanding and his magnanimity, enlightened and ennobled, burst through his prejudices to pay you a just compliment, the breach was instantly repaired, and in his own breast and in the breasts of his party, these prejudices have pent up, against you, not wisdom and generosity only, but truth—They will have their enlargement—The day will come when the Statue, and the hearts of a grateful people, will bear the honourable and useful memorial of their triumph. *Magna est veritas et prevalebit.*

I wish I could be favoured with your thoughts upon the State Papers which have lately appeared. With veneration and esteem,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams,*

*Quincy, Mass.*



## LETTER XXXII.

QUINCY, *March 4, 1809.**Dear Sir,*

I have yours of February 20th and 23d. The enclosed five sheets are the rough draft, which I have requested and you have promised to return. I shall burn it, because I have made another copy more correct, in which I have left out the name, and much of the Trumpery.

Return the enclosed as soon as you can to

Your humble servant,

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. Wm. Cunningham.*

## LETTER XXXIII.

FITCHBURG, *March 14, 1809.**Dear Sir,*

My solicitude to see your strictures upon Mr. Pickering's letter was satisfied by the last mail. I acquit myself, by the enclosure of the sheets, of one of the stipulations upon which you transmitted them to me—the other has not been violated.



It is evident that the plan of your administration and the *medium* of your foreign intercourse, were not formed to be associated.

With veneration and esteem,

I am, &c.

W<sup>M</sup>. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

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#### LETTER XXXIV.

QUINCY, *March 20, 1809.*

*Dear Sir,*

I have received your favours of March 11th and 14th. In answer to the first, I wish to know whether you remember Gen. Washington's answer to Adet, the successor of Genet. It was written by the Gentleman in question, and, by the spirit of it, represented the President almost as ardent a Jacobin as himself. He had not yet been converted from his Gallicism and Jacobinism. You remember the thing; "Born and educated in a free Country," &c. "wonderful people," &c.

You wish to be informed of my thoughts upon the State papers, which have lately appeared. What State papers do you mean? The Diplo-



matic correspondence between our Administration and the Cabinets of France and England? or the votes of our towns of Boston, Newburyport, Augusta, &c. &c. &c.? or the Resolutions, Addresses, &c. of our Massachusetts House and Senate? or the volumes of speeches in Congress? If you want my comments upon all this farrago, you cut out more work for me than I have days to live.

You speak of the fortunate issue of my negotiation with France to my Fame!!! I cannot express my astonishment. No thanks for that action, the most disinterested, the most determined and the most successful of my whole life. No acknowledgment of it ever appeared among the Republicans, and the Federalists have pursued me with the most unrelenting hatred and my Children too, from that time to this. Covered however with the thickest veils of their hypocrisy because there was some danger in being too open. My Fame!!! It has been the systematical policy of both parties, from that period especially, and indeed for twelve years before to conceal from the people all the services of my life. And they have succeeded to a



degree, that I should scarcely have believed it possible for a union of both parties to effect.

I know too well that it was alleged, and Pickering's correspondents, Higginson and Cabot, alleged in their cowardly anonymous way, *and they even corrupted Ben. Russell*, against his own judgment, to print their calumnies in the Centinel, "that I had nothing but informal intimations." But the fact is, that I had the most direct, formal and official information and assurances, in two different ways and through two different diplomatic organs. The first was a resolve of the Directory signified by their Secretary, Talleyrande, and conveyed to Mr. Pichon, Secretary of Legation and *charge des affairs* of France, in the absence of their Ambassador at the Hague, by Mr. Pichon to Mr. Murray, the American Minister at the Hague, and by him officially to me. This was a legal communication according to the most scrupulous usage and practice of the Courts of the world; the most delicate in all matters of etiquette. In what other manner could the Cabinet of France have communicated with me. They had no Minister in America. They were



at war with England and had no minister there. They could not therefore convey any thing to me through Mr. King. Through Spain, Portugal or Prussia, would have been more round about, have taken more time, and been infinitely less certain of a safe conveyance. The Directory then took the best possible course in their power. And the assurance was as complete as words could express. The second assurance was more positive, more explicit and decisive still, and through the most authentic channel that existed. It was Mr. Gerry, one of my own Ambassadors, and by way of excellence my own Ambassador, for I had appointed him against the advice of all my ministers to the furious provocation of Pickering and against the advice of all the Senators whom he could influence. Mr. Gerry, in an official public letter, conveyed to me, at the request of the Directory and their Secretary, Talleyrande, the most positive and express assurances, that I had demanded. This letter of Mr. Gerry threw Pickering into so furious a rage against Gerry, that in a report to me which I requested him to draw for me to communicate to Congress, he



inserted a most virulent, false, and calumnious philippic against Gerry. I read it with amazement. I scarcely thought that prejudice and party rage could go so far; I told him it would not do: it was very injurious and totally unfounded. I took my pen and obliterated the whole passage as I thought, but after all, I inadvertently let some expressions pass, which ought to have been erased. Pickering reddened with rage, or grief, as if he had been bereaved of a darling child. He even went so far as to beg that I would spare it, and let it go to Congress. But I was inexorable; and, his hatred of me has been unrelenting from that time to this.

But these were not all the official assurances I received. I had personal conversations with Mr. Gerry and in detail. He declared to me, that he had the most decisive assurances both from the Directory and Talleyrande, that they would not only receive my minister upon my own terms, but make peace with me on my own terms. And I am convinced, had that Constitution continued and the negotiation been conducted with the Directory, I should have had



my own terms. But Napoleon came in and altered the case a little. The convention, however, as finally ratified, is a monument of the dignity my country once had and of the respect paid to its policy and power. Unofficial assurances I had moreover. I will mention two instances. Mr. Logan of Philadelphia, however scorned and run down by the English party, is a Gentleman of fortune, education, good breeding and not despicable abilities. After his return from France, he made me a visit, and politely informed me, that he waited on me at the request of Talleyrande, to assure me in the most solemn manner, that the Directory wished for peace with the United States and desired me to send a minister, or authorize one already in Europe to treat, and that I might depend upon his cordial and honourable reception; and, that a treaty should be made to my satisfaction. I should however have paid no attention to this, if I had not received other similar assurances through Mr. Murray and Mr. Gerry.

Another instance was through General Washington. Mr. Joel Barlow wrote a long, elaborate, elegant and ingenious letter to General



Washington, in which he urged negotiation and peace with a variety of arguments, and insisted upon it, that every thing might easily be arranged to mutual satisfaction. Washington was so impressed by it, that he sent it to me, with a letter of his own, in which he said to me, that he had reason to believe that Barlow's Letter was written with the knowledge and consent of the French Government. And Washington added, that "it appeared to him that the people of America were very desirous of peace." What could I understand by this hint, but an expression of his opinion, that I ought to endeavour to make peace if I could? However, Barlow's letter would have had no more weight with me than Logan's message, nor would Washington's opinion have been regarded more than either, if they had not been preceded or followed by the regular communications through Murray and Gerry. With this diplomatic evidence, every Court in Europe and the French Nation themselves, as well as our American people, would have cried shame upon the French Government and justified a subsequent war.



This conduct should not have brought upon me disgrace. But the British faction was determined to have a war with France, and Alexander Hamilton at the head of the army and then President of the United States. Peace with France was therefore treason against their fundamental maxims and reasons of state.

But if I had been too hasty in declaring, that I would not send a minister, but upon certain conditions, or too easy in receiving the conditions, why should the Federalists endeavour to render me unpopular for this? It could answer no end but to turn me out, and they ought to have known, that they could carry no other man in the Union; or, to force me to retract my nomination of ambassadors, or suspend their voyage and supercede the negociation altogether.

These were their motives and they exhausted all their wit in studies and labours to defeat the whole design. A war with France, an alliance with England, and Alexander Hamilton the father of their speculating systems at the head of our Army and the State, were their hobby-horse, their vision of sovereign felicity.



No wonder they hate the author of their defeat.

The papers you promised to return, I have received in yours of the 14th in better order than they went from

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. William Cunningham, Jr.*

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### LETTER XXXV.

FITCHBURG, *March* 31, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

I know not when my sensibilities have been more exquisitely touched, than they were, by the perusal of your favour of the 20th inst. and by the concluding sentence of your letter to Messrs. Wright and Lyman, which I read at the same time. Thoroughly sensible as I am of the wrong which has been done you, I am yet persuaded, that the natural effect of your own reflections upon it, is to its aggravation, and to a misconception of its object. I mean with the Federal party at large. The vehement opposition of the leading Federalists to a third mission to France, and the coldness



with which they requited your regard to your high responsibility, were the most unadvised steps ; their effect was to oust you, and overthrow the Federal cause together—Party spirit is uncounsellable, and mischance is generally the consequence of its rashness. So nearly equipoised as were the parties, equanimity was the virtue, on which the Federalists could alone rely to preserve their preponderance. That you was the only candidate in the nation which, with all the prudence they could exercise, they could carry into the Presidency, was a fact well understood by them, and their conduct towards you quadrated at last with that impression. At the election of 1800, their endeavours in your favour were unabated by their disapprobation of the third diplomatic attempt to adjust our differences with France. From the advice, *very particularly urged*, by Hamilton upon the electors, to give an *equal* vote to Gen. Pinckney, it may be suspected, that in case of the success of the Federal ticket, and of a choice eventually by the House of Representatives, he intended to throw his influence into that body in favour of the Carolinian. But the great body of the



people would have spurned this Machiavelian stratagem. It was *you*, and you only, whom *they* designated for the first office in their gift. Excepting the devices, of a transient duration, which were employed to hoodwink the public respecting the reasons you had, again to resort to negociation with France, I cannot think that, even with the rankest Essex-Junto-men, there has ever been a disposition to your detraction; an estimation of your worth and talents bordering on devotion, has been a common sentiment. Should you object to my opinion the splenetic ebullitions of the "Libeller" Hamilton, I should not be disposed to retract it. I have no disposition to depreciate the talents of Hamilton—had they been greater, the invectives in his "Letter" could not have been sharpened by them.

Your enumeration of the various ways in which the solicitude of the Directory to avert the displeasure of an insulted people, was communicated to you, gives me great pleasure and satisfaction. They are ample authority for the felicitations I expressed to you on the fortunate termination to your fame of our disputes with



France. It affects me, my dear sir, that you understood me as referring to "present popularity, that echo of folly and shadow of renown." I meant not the fame resembling a vegetable forced in a hot house, expanding luxuriantly but with a sickly hue, and which expires the instant it is exposed—But, I intended, the fame represented by the Mountain Oak, deepening its roots the more it has to encounter, and though often stripped and shattered by the fury of the elements, imbibes from them a vigour which makes its spreading branches and its trunk invincible to their power. And in my reference to this fame, I accorded with the opinion you expressed in the letter to which I replied—You said (speaking of the year '98) "If ever an historian should arise fit for the investigation, this transaction must be transmitted to posterity as the most glorious period in American history." In the dialogue with Count Diodati, you could not have avoided the consolation of the reflection, that, if in the strange contrariety of human conduct, you should, like Aristides, be banished by the Ostracism, confined like Miltiades, forced, like Phœcion, to the poisonous draught, or be



slain like Scipio, truth would soon triumph over delusion, and perpetuate in sculpture its irreversible decisions. Among the comforts of this world, I hope, dear sir, that you will yet find mingled the extatic ore of knowing, that you live contemporaneously with your own glory, and may you leave the world—*Vita cedat uti conviva satur.*

I perfectly recollect the Address to Adet, but that it was penned by Pickering, I did not before know.

The State papers upon which I wished to have your thoughts, were those issued by our Legislature; the word "Farrago" is intelligible of your opinion of *all* that have recently appeared.

I inclose the Lieut. Governor's Paper, that you may see what use, in the electioneering way, is made of your Letter to Wright and Lyman. Was it your expectation that they would have made it public?

With affection and respect,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*



## LETTER XXXVI.

QUINCY, *April 24, 1809.**Dear Sir,*

I received your favour of the 31st March in due time: but I am become, all at once and very unexpectedly, a man of business, and of so much importance in the world, that I have not found time to acknowledge it, till now.

You say your sensibilities were exquisitely touched by my last letter to you and my letter to Wright and Lyman which you received at the same time. The word sensibilities has a very extensive signification. There are sensibilities of pity, compassion, and sympathy; sensibilities of fear, terror and horror; sensibilities of resentment and revenge; sensibilities of anger, wrath and fury; sensibilities of contempt, disdain and scorn; sensibilities of ridicule and humour; and lastly sensibilities of love and tender affections. I will not descend to sensibilities of a lower and more brutal kind.

But you have not told me what species of sensibilities were so forcibly excited in your bosom by those poor letters of mine.

Your sentiments, concerning the Federalists



in general, and their regard to me at the time when I made peace with France, are, I believe, very just. But, the leaders are all ; the followers nothing : and the leaders are, and have long been, my enemies. The great body are silent and inactive, and not a man of them has ever stepped forth to vindicate me, or express the slightest indignation at the eternal revilings, which appear in their Newspapers.

A new paper has been set up in Boston called the Boston Patriot, edited by Everett and Munroe. Merely because the paper was a novelty, and the editors total strangers to me, I have chosen it to convey some thoughts to the public. I will either throw off that intolerable load of obloquy and insolence they have thrown upon me, or I will perish in the struggle.

In vain will you soothe me with the hopes of justice from posterity—from any future historian. Too many falsehoods are already transmitted to posterity that are irrevocable. Records themselves are often liars. No human being but myself, can do me justice ; and, I shall not be believed. All I can say will be imputed to



vanity and self love. Be it so. Job, Paul and Tully, shall be my examplars.

You ask if I expected that Wright and Lyman would publish my letter. I did not believe it probable that they would: but, I did not care if they did. I thought it possible they might publish the paragraph relative to Gore's Declaration of war against France.

The Dialogue with Deodati is literal truth, and I could give you a multitude of reasons I had in my mind, besides the general, the universal conduct and destiny of democratic Republics,\* for the expectations I then expressed to that wise and learned Ambassador from the Elector of Saxony. The Dialogue from first

\* Note in the handwriting of Mr. Adams' correspondent. "It will be recollected, that the spirit of this dialogue was to shew that Mr. Adams, though then enjoying the confidence of his country, would become, at last, an object of its persecution. The expectation of this on the part of Mr. A. was founded on the 'general, the universal conduct and destiny of democratical Republics.' What is this 'conduct and destiny?' It is ingratitude to public benefactors,—anarchy—despotism. In the preceding letter from Mr. Adams, he says, that certain 'conduct of his, should not have brought upon him disgrace'—&c. Does this language shew Mr. A. to be so well reconciled to the fruition of his expectations, as the indifference would indicate in which he pronounced their anticipation to Deodati?"



to last, was in a strain of perfect good humour, and indeed of high hilarity and free conviviality.

I am as ever, yours,

JOHN ADAMS.

P. S. I considered you as one of my own House. They called me venerable Father of New-England. I resented that, because, if there was any pretence for calling me Father of New-England, there was equal pretence for calling me Father of Kentucky and Tennessee. I was therefore willing to be thought the Father of the Nation.

J. A.

*Mr. Wm. Cunningham.*

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### LETTER XXXVII.

FITCHBURG, *May 6, 1809.*

*Dear Sir,*

I was duly favoured with yours of the 24th ult. The species of sensibility excited by your Letters in March, are defined by the interest I take in whatever affects your repose, your happiness, and your just claims on the affections, confidence and gratitude of a Country reared under your paternal care. If it



can be necessary to be more particular, they were the various and refined emotions springing, as in their native source, from the contemplation of an unexampled instance of neglected virtue, unruffled yet not unhurt, at the remembrance of the unprovoked waywardness it had experienced.

I should receive with much pleasure, an account of all the reasons you had for giving the public your interlocutory discourse with the Representative of the Elector of Saxony. *One* reason is extremely obvious, and was regarded with equal grace and fitness—it was, to shew, that there had not grown out of ingratitude a more numerous nor a more flagitious progeny than are generally, if not legitimately, produced in the heats of party, and consequently, not a greater than you were prepared to meet and manage in their frowardness. Introduced with such a presentiment, the conclusion of your letter to Wright and Lyman, which you have, probably, noticed to have incurred the accusation of whimpering, bears not the lovely weakness of a heart in the spontaneous effusion of its sorrow, but is expressed in



a happy union of dignified civility, and of graceful chastisement—in the point and purity of your exemplar Paul, not in the perturbed temper of Xerxes when he scourged the sea. The cause of your constructing that sentence in such a strain of touching tenderness, must cease to receive your censure—the fortunate occasion it afforded you of expressing the Nationality of your affections, atones for its fault. Confirmed, by your coincidence, in the correctness of my sentiments concerning the Federalists in general, I feel my confidence strengthened in the soundness of my knowledge of some of their late leaders. Alexander Hamilton was their head and hope. He was the Messiah, under whose reign a political millenium was to be enjoyed. Extravagant encomiums on his talents had lifted my estimation of him to a lofty height, and I readily confess, that in some interviews I had with him in New-York, the prop of his fame of a capacious understanding was perspicuously displayed. It is the pride of his friends that he was ambitious ; but that this passion was in him kept down to virtuous emulation, upon which alone they can exult, is not so evident.



The testimony of Gen. Washington in his favour, if not extorted, is yet not unexceptionable. Washington, like yourself, had come under the displeasure of this paragon of propriety, and a threatening of a public exposure of his mistakes, was suspended over the head of Washington like the sword of Damocles, with this difference, that it should fall, not on falsehood but on indolence. This is a fact, unknown to the public. It is unknown, except to a very few in the Nation—*You sir, know what authority I have for the declaration,\** General Washington was overawed with a menace, which gave you but the more resolution. Whether he or you had the higher reliance on the consciousness of right, and on strength of capacity to wield the cudgel against him—and “there can be no victory without crossing the cudgels”—are questions, which even if they were not now passing the test of experiment, I might with more propriety, postpone to posterity, than refer to your determination, or pronounce to you my own.

\*This note is in the hand writing of Mr. Adams' correspondent. “Mr. Adams is himself my authority for all this, and more.”



Such is my opinion of the late Idol of the Federal party. If he would not like "Moloch, vault over all impediments to seize the goal of his ambition," his course was undeviatingly shaped towards it. At the fourth Presidential Election, it was, I suspect, his intention to keep the nation bewildered, to deceive them with directions, and to guide them by the circumvolutions of a wheel, as Tony did Marlow and Hastings, on Crack-skull Common. In the course of the election canvass, General Pinckney made an excursion into the eastern section of the union. On his return, Hamilton accompanied him from New-York to New-Jersey, where he had with him a lengthy interview. It may be presumed that a plan of proceeding was concerted. I do not derive this presumption from any suspicion of the honour of Pinckney, but it is irresistibly pressed by the unwarrantable assumptions of Hamilton on your advancement to the Presidency; and, by his being offended at your very proper treatment of his officiousness. His agency had become active in the administration of the Government. His pride was inflated with the confidence which



was reposed in him, and by the submission implicitly paid by many to his opinions. It cannot be doubted, that having unsuccessfully aspired to the direction of the measures of which you were the appointed head, he wished a succession to your place of a Chief (if this is not contradiction) who would keep his bureau at New-York. But why have I told you all this? You, to whom, without allusion, every secret was as promptly known, as were to Cicero the schemes of Cataline? I have done it to let you see that I have not been studious of your story without acquiring some acquaintance with the arcana-credenda, so necessary to its explanation.

Interwoven as are the reasons for the dismissal of Pickering, with other explanations, I think it probable that you will publicly reveal them, and release me from the injunctions I am under. They are the great mystery. A person ycleped General Eaton, and who affects to be in every secret, in a speech at a meeting of the Town of Brimfield, has very confidently asserted the cause to be Pickering's opposition to your nomination of Col. Smith for a General Officer.



Seeing, in some other papers, a notice of your Communications to the Boston Patriot, I shall send for that paper. I cannot conceal from you my apprehension, that in throwing yourself into the troubled element of dispute, you will meet with many angry surges—I have more satisfaction in communicating the conviction that you will reach the shore without calling upon Cassius. Forming yourself upon the model of Paul, you will be crowned with his success, before his judge and accusers.

With veneration and affection,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

## LETTER XXXVIII.

QUINCY, *June 7, 1809.*

*Dear Sir,*

Yours of May 6th, I have not acknowledged, and cannot particularly consider the abundance of matter in it at present. If you see the Patriot, you will see that I am scribbling, twice a week. I am



hammering out a brass farthing into an acre of leaf brass. But I was determined that posterity should know the facts relative to my peace with France in 1800. I expect "angry surges" enough. Let them come. They cannot sink me lower than the bottom, and I have been safely landed there these eight years.

I rodomontaded with Lyman and Wright. They called me Father of New-England—I resented that, because if I was a Father at all, I was Father of all the States—I am, in earnest, a friend to the whole Union, comprehending East, West, North and South, and I will not countenance a project of division.

John Q. Adams exposed Eaton's usurped title of General, which is directly against the Constitution, and opposed the grant of fifty thousand dollars to him, for which he had no just claim. That is enough for Eaton to revenge. It is true, that Pickering, at the instigation of Hamilton as I suppose, who was jealous of Smith as a favourite of Washington and a better officer than himself, excited a faction in the Senate against him, and to my knowledge propagated many scandalous falsehoods concerning him,



and got him negatived, though Washington had recommended him to me. But no personal or family considerations would have induced me to dismiss Pickering. My motives were public altogether: but I have not yet told you half of them.

A most profound silence is observed relative to my scribbles. I say not a word about them to any one: and nobody says a word to me. The Newspapers are as still as midnight. I suppose the sulphureous combustibles are preparing under ground, and the electrical fire collecting in the clouds. The storm of thunder and lightning, hail and rain, I expect will burst upon me all at once; and, the volcanoes burst out at the same time. If I am neither drowned in the rain, nor pierced with the bolts, nor blown into the atmosphere by the eruptions, I must be invulnerable.

*Hic murus aheneus Esto.* This heart be my wall of Brass.

I will not die for nothing. My pen shall go as long as my fingers can hold it.

I should be glad to know if you read the Pat-



riot, and what is thought of it, whether and wherein I have exposed myself?

In great haste,

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. Cunningham.*

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### LETTER XXXIX.

FITCHBURG, June 14, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

I am favoured with yours of the 7th inst. After telling me that the employment of your thoughts upon your public essays precludes your attention for the present, to my letters, I should be bereft of apology for filling again a whole sheet, if you had not also said that you are in no apprehension of being inundated. Amidst the heaviest outpouring which may be supposed to be congregating in the elements of human vengeance, I know you will stand like a conductor of electric fluid, which the lightning can only seize, envelope, and rush down its sides, but which it leaves uninjured to cool, and to stand again with its daring points, amid the storm. That you are a friend to an



indivisible union of the States, is most clearly evinced ; and you derive from your concern for the common welfare, as indisputable a right as was possessed by Augustus to the honourable and endearing title of the *Father of your Country*.

It was then because Mr. John Q. Adams had given the upstart scribbler, and pedantic mystagogue, Eaton, his deserts, that he spit at him the toady poison with which he was so much distended.

I take the Patriot, but either through miscarriage or purloining, I have failed of the reception of two numbers. You ask me "what is thought of your communications, *and whether, and wherein you have exposed yourself?*" I understand that a replication to your papers, will be a task assigned to, or assumed by, Coleman. But if you are not to be answered, some short sentence of scurrility will be invented and scattered.

An elderly and respectable Clergyman, on his way home from Boston, called on me last Friday, and continued over night. He informed me without any reserve, that Mr. Whitney,



your Minister, represented to him, that your resolution to rescue your reputation from reproach, is regarded by your whole family as an unfortunate determination, but that you are inexorable to their entreaties to desist. This is one of the tales of the table, and whether true or unfounded, ought not, I think to be propagated by Mr. Whitney without permission, but he is pas among the pragmatists. Perhaps the Clergy have got their cue. Osgood made a pass at you in his election Sermon. Some of the village papers, mere puppies of the pack, have scented, and wag their joy that they have dared to bark at some of your numbers. It is unnecessary to refer you to these papers, for like Alexander or Scander, you can enter the lists with none but kings. You may have noticed that the Repertory, which I consider as sounding the highest note on the Federal gamut, lately insinuated that Everett and Munroe were put by you into the typographical department to serve as the instruments of your ill-will towards certain characters. But such sportsmen at your reputation will find that they have been discharging popguns at an elephant.



The enquiry whether, and wherein you have exposed yourself? imposes upon me the most difficult of duties, though one, which, towards a great mind, may be performed without dread. Before I reply, I cannot but remark on the free and flowing style in which your developement is written. To an application I made to you, last winter, for some sentiments, you answered, that you had neither hands nor eyes, nor time to write. The occasion which has brought you before the public, has been the Medea of your renovation. The struggle in which you are engaged may demand the strength of earlier years, and I am happy in the discovery, that you are in the vigor of the restored son.

In the number dated May —, wherein you describe the importunate and fatiguing earnestness of Hamilton to inoculate you with his visionary fears, you piteously and deridingly use in a notice of his person, the adjective *little*. I lamented the appearance of that descriptive word, because the stature of a man has no relation to a mensuration of his mind; and I lamented it, because it may be too chargeable with acrimony. If men were to rank high, or



to be undervalued, according as they are high or low on the size-stick, Maximin must have been the greatest, and Napoleon is the least of all adult monarchs. I know that you had too much provocation in the gross incivility, I might say rudeness, of Hamilton towards you; but would not your exposures of him, have had as much weight, had you omitted an expression of contempt? It is possible that as nature has not given me indemnity against such a stroke I may be too sensible of its wrong.

In the number dated May 29th, I have some doubt, whether you have not too incautiously asserted of Mr. Ames, that "despair of a re-election from the increase of the opposite party in his district, had induced him to decline to stand a candidate." At the election which next ensued his speech on the British Treaty, I know, he had not the most distant expectation of being re-chosen. This appears by his letters to Dr. Clark and others. Boston was in a ferment against the Treaty, and forwarded their Resolutions to Philadelphia by the wood-chuck, Revere. At the election referred to, Ames did not suffer his doubts, or despair of a re-election, to influence



him to decline being a candidate. "The delicacy of his health, and the despondency of his disposition" are very correctly assigned as causes of his refusal to be a candidate, and were not these enough to mention?

In this paper, you have unfolded many of the particulars which you disclosed to me at an interview, I had the honour to have with you at your house in August 1804, and which I preserved to assist me in the composition of some essays. Comparing its contents with my minutes, I cannot but think you more courteous than I am, in being willing to bestow so much unqualified praise on Mr. Jefferson. You strengthen an encomium on this gentleman by founding it on "*an intimate friendship for five and twenty years,*" and by a fellowship, perhaps as long in public business. According to my memorandums, you mentioned at the interview in 1804 that Mr. Jefferson while a member of the old Congress, frequently vented sarcasms against religion, and once, in debate spoke sneeringly of the scriptures, which drew you from your seat. The strength and severity of your observations in reply procured acknowl-



edgments from R. H. Lee and two others. You acknowledged Jefferson to have been a student in some branches of learning, but thought him superficially acquainted with the science of civil rule. You gave me a minute account of the framing of the declaration of Independence, and why and to what extent, Jefferson had a hand in it. And you told me, that when Mr. Jefferson was appointed Ambassador to France, he informed you, that he would not embark without his wife, and that he would not be exposed, with his family, to a British man of war for all this world. All these particulars, but without the most distant allusion to the source whence I derived them, have been incorporated into my political speculations; and, I have reposed upon you for my authority. In addition to this in a letter, dated January 16th, 1804, after enumerating the various stations in his political life, you speak thus of Mr. Jefferson:—“*Anecdotes from my memory would certainly be known. There are some there, known only to him and me. But they would not be believed, at least they would be said not to be believed, and would be imputed to envy, revenge,*



*or vanity. I wish him no ill ; I envy him not. I shudder at the calamities which I fear his conduct is preparing for his Country, from a mean thirst of popularity, an inordinate ambition, and want of sincerity."* If you have written and spoken in this manner to others, and it should become public, would it not palsy your panegyric? I know that this enquiry can be very properly pursued by an "*analysis of investigation.*"

Again. In the third column, you say, Hamilton's friends, among the heads of departments, and their correspondents in Boston, New-York and Philadelphia, sympathized with him very cordially in his hatred of Gerry, *and of every other man who had laboured and suffered early in the Revolution.*" Have you not gone too far here? Were not Washington, Knox, and many more, "who had laboured and suffered in the Revolution," in the confidence of Hamilton and his friends?

Respecting Hamilton's synopsis, handed to you by Mr. Tracy, I recurred to my notes. I find the army was to be one hundred thousand instead of fifty thousand. In the Patriot of last



Saturday you say that a majority in the States south of the Hudson, would have confederated under Burr, and a majority north of that river, under Hamilton—that Burr would have beaten Hamilton to pieces—what would have followed, you say; let the prophets foretel. Is not the mastery of the Chiefs as much a matter of prediction as any of the consequences? Is it not the main question?

I must on your account, as well as my own, defer a farther examination.

Is not the “review of the works of Fisher Ames,” written by the younger Pliny.

With veneration and affection,

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

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## LETTER XL.

QUINCY, *June 22, 1809.*

*Dear Sir,*

I most sincerely thank you for your excellent letter of the 14th.—It contains an abundance of matter that deserves, and shall



have my most serious consideration. But at present I have not time to be serious. I had a delicious laugh with my family. I said nothing till we were all at table at dinner: My wife, my two daughters in law, my niece, Miss Louisa Smith, and my two grand daughters, misses, just entering their teens. My son was at Cambridge. I assumed a very grave countenance, and said I had received information, from fifty miles distance, that I had given offence to my family. I was very sorry to hear it, I wished to know which it was, that I might make my apology or give some satisfaction. Lord! Who? What? Why? what, sir, can you mean? sounded instantly from all quarters.

I learn that my family is grieved at my Letters in the Newspapers, and have intreated me to desist, but that I obstinately go on to their mortification. The whole table was in a roar at this. My Wife had read every line, I believe, but one letter, before it went to the press. She was not alarmed. My two daughters declared they had never said a word. My two grand daughters cried out, that on the contrary nothing delighted them so much as to read



them. Louisa, I know, said I, never said any thing for she is no talker. Aye but I have said something, for I was in company with ladies in Boston a few days ago, who were lamenting that you were writing, and said it was unnecessary and below your dignity. I was very much provoked and said, why should not my uncle vindicate himself, as well as any other gentleman? My daughter in law said "I know sir that your two sons are very much delighted that you have taken the subject up." This I knew as well as she did.

Never, sir, was a more groundless report or a more sheer fabrication. Mr. Whitney never could have said any such thing.

A number of these dastardly lies have been made and circulated, but I regard them no more than the croak of the Tree Toad.

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. Cunningham.*

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## LETTER XLI.

FITCHBURG, *June 30, 1809.*

*Dear Sir,*

I received, by the last mail, your esteemed favour of the 22d inst. The unit-



ed testimony of your most amiable family in repulsion of the calumny which was said to have originated with Mr. Whitney has not disappointed me. Should it become again a topic at your social board, I pray that my affectionate respects may go along with it to the company.

In my last I taxed your patience pretty largely with my comments on your publications in the Patriot. As you have received them with the indulgence due to their intention, I feel encouraged to proceed, and to lay upon you the unassessed part of these comments, as heavily as your warrant will authorize.

Several of your letters shew throughout the hand of Ulysses. The passages of beauty in them, and of harmony with your other works, which frequently occur, I mark as I proceed. But I shall be more afraid of offending you with their enumeration, than I am with pointing out any instances of defect or disagreement—these, for that is my commission, I must seek, and find Caesar, if I can, in contradiction with himself. I must apprise you before I go farther, that my receipt of the Patriot has been again



interrupted ; and those which get to hand I cannot secure against an avaricious curiosity. I passed over a paragraph in the letter dated May 29th, which I will now notice, not because it contradicts any thing you have before said, but to shew you, that the distance between you when President, and Mr. Jefferson will be accounted for, upon principles which may be supposed to have been then operative on your mind. In the letter you say, "We parted as good friends as we had always lived ; but we consulted but very little together afterwards. Party violence soon rendered it impracticable, or at least useless." Here you give the cause of the distance between you, and it will be admitted on your credibility—but, in the "Discourses on Davila," you said (as I recollect the passage) that it would be impolitic for, and you give reasons why, a Chief should refrain from an intimacy with the second in power."

When I read your letter to the printers of the Patriot dated June 7th, I regretted having made objections to the epithet *little*, used in a preceding number, because it was, compared with the contents of this, a small article ; and because,



from a natural obstinacy in adhering to what we once advance, they may have insensibly assisted in strengthening a doubt, whether you have adopted the method of treating Hamilton, the best adapted to the satisfaction of the public of your own vast superiority. Your letter to the printers begins with a quotation from Hamilton, which you call "a phantom, conjured up to terrify minds and nerves as weak as his own." But you immediately add, that his opinion was embraced by some, of whose "sense and firmness," you had good expectations. In aiming a blow at Hamilton, have you not struck, indiscriminately, his friends and followers, and angered them with the accusation, rather aggravated than alleviated, of mental and nervous weakness? In lieu of the measure which had been proposed by Hamilton, "we might," you say, "as well petition the King and Parliament of Great Britain, to take us again under their gracious protection." "Is any one certain that Great Britain would consent to it, if we should propose it?" This enquiry is in your own words, as contained in your answer to the address of the Grand Jury of the county of Ulster



in the State of New-York, dated Sept. 26, 1798, in which you declared your disbelief, that Great Britain would again receive us in the character of Colonies. Is the reply to Hamilton and the reply to the Jury of the same complexion? Again—You say in the letter under consideration, that “Mr. Murray must have gone to Paris with his full powers, or must have communicated them to Mr. Pichon—The French Government must have appointed a Minister to treat with him—their full powers must have been exchanged.” Was this etiquette necessarily to be followed on the adoption of Hamilton’s plan of having a minister, resident at a neighbouring Court, empowered, and provisionally instructed to treat with France? His words are:—“with eventual instructions predicated upon appearances of approaching peace.” Is it unusual or improper to give such instructions? Is it not customary for an offending power, inclined to reparation, to sound the disposition of the injured nation, and to pass propositions to it through its functionary at another Court? You contend, and correctly, that it is not only customary, but proper, and that what comes through



such a channel is entitled to attention. Admitting this, and that the advances must have come from that side, were not the objections to Hamilton's plan founded on its being less expedient than your own, rather than on its impracticability, or on the embarrassments to its execution? The secrecy recommended did not, I think, betray forgetfulness of the Constitution. "You might" he says, "secretly and confidentially have nominated." To whom? The Senate. Did his recommendation mean any thing more than the usual injunction? And would his design have been exposed to defeat if the nomination had been dishonourably promulgated? Such promulgation would not have made the appointments an overt act of the Government, which is all, that he wished, for the sake of appearances to have avoided. In one of your Letters, you suggest that the President's privy council, should be under an oath of secrecy. In the appointment of Ambassadors, the Senate are that Council—Can Hamilton be blamed for presuming on the honour which can alone supply the omission of an oath? If, however, his system had, as you assert, no other motive than



to shun giving umbrage to England, it is impossible that it should be condemned with too much severity, or treated with too much contempt. You go on and say :—" Besides, this would have been the very indirect and circuitous mode which Mr. Hamilton so deeply deplored." It would, indeed, have been a circuitous mode, but so far from the case in which he deplored being so, he thought, as he asserts, that a due regard to our honour restricted us to that mode in every farther effort of our own to produce an eclairsissement with France. It is obviously true, that the circumstances, which give a nation a right to demand an act of condescension of another, ought to keep her stubbornly resolved against her own humiliation. If Hamilton sincerely believed that the honour of the nation stood opposed to an embrace of the overtures which had been made, can he be accused of attempts upon your fidelity, and on the faith of the Government in endeavouring to dissuade you against meeting them ?

You hint, in the next Letter, that, with views to hostilities with France, Hamilton intended to encumber the intercourse with her; and, you



rest a presumption of his disinclination to peace, on his ardour for military fame; on his recommendation to provide an Army of a magnitude disproportioned to our dangers; on some expressions of concern for his personal safety without military protection, on the extinguishment, by peace, of this refuge, and on his insisting that France should, contrary to the confidence you presume he had she would not, send a Minister here. I feel the weight of this presumption—but, would it not have been better, that you should have forborne to do more than to bring to light the facts which favour it, and to have left to others the inference of “Thus it is, when self-sufficient ignorance impertinently obtrudes itself into offices”—and—“when ambition undertakes to sacrifice all characters, and the peace of Nations, to its own private interest?”

You conclude the letter of the 7th, with an insinuation of Hamilton’s destitution of the Military knowledge of a drill Sargeant.—You speak of the inglorious passions excited in him by the greater capacity and assiduity of another Zieten, with whom he was connected in his Military



command—and of the “puerilities” which degraded him below “the awkwardest boy at college.” A retort, like that of Mr. Pitt upon Sir Robert Walpole, expressed before the excitements to it have opportunity to subside, is regarded by mankind with more favour, than a retort, in the same spirit, uttered long after its provocation had passed by. Had you reviewed the reasons why it is so, I think you would have been more sparing.

In loading so liberally the memory of Hamilton, have you conformed to the counsel inculcated in the “*Discourses on Davila*,” in the thirty-first and last number, respecting the rivalries of great families? And, in thus loading him, have you not, injuriously to yourself, inflamed the feelings of many, who, with much fondness, cherish his remembrance? Can he, without a reflection upon Washington, be accused of an incapacity to “*teach tactics to his troops*?” Can he, without a reflection upon Jay and Madison, be charged with “*puerilities*,” when, in concert with these gentlemen, he made an exposition of the Constitution, which is appealed to in Congress, and in our Courts, as a standard?



Can he, without a reflection upon several Universities, and upon all our historians, be ranked below "*the awkwardest boy at College,*" when those have conferred on him their highest honours, and these have been lavish in encomiums on his talents? Even Mrs. Warren, strongly prejudiced against him, is not an exception. Would it not have been better to have defined with perspicuity, as you have done, the reasons for your proceedings with respect to France, and to have left to the reader the inference of Hamilton's mistakes?

Soon after Gov. Jay returned from his last embassy to Europe, I dined with him at his house in New-York, with a large party, of whom Hamilton was one. The Governor, after Mr. Hamilton withdrew, spoke of the estimation in which he was held in Europe, and said that he was the first in fame there of the Americans. And he gave his opinion very freely, that the talents of Hamilton were not overrated. Talents so ably defended, will not be likely to be carried by a *russe de guerre*. It was in this view, that I at first had thoughts of giving you this information, but since I have seen your let-



ter of the 22d inst. I have another motive sufficiently audible in silence.—When I told you, and gave some reasons why the Federalists could not have preferred Mr. Jay for President, I may have reckoned without my host.

What a slap in the letter of the 22d have you given the Monticellonian sage, in asserting your superiority to the same sacrifices which he refused to make, in the service of his Country! The resolution which you adopted, of Martin Luther, was as aptly adapted to your situation as to your character. A Revolution as important to mankind as the reformation in 1517, took place in 1775, and of the one you were as much the head as Luther of the other.

Again—Your letter published last Saturday, dated June 10th, begins with a reflection on Hamilton's venal appetites. You had alluded to them before; and, if they were founded on the affair with his paramour, the bonaroba Reynolds, are you not unkind in laying open that wound? It is an aphorism of Lavater, that, "He who has genius and eloquence sufficient to cover or excuse his errors, yet extenuates not, but rather accuses himself, and unequivocally



confesses guilt, approaches the circle of immortals." It will not be disputed, that he who penitently makes this confession, obtains acquittance at the bar of reason and religion. I have no occasion, on my own account, to be an apologist of incontinence. It is a crime which empties a poisonous vial into that little fountain of connubial bliss, in which the finest feelings of our nature have their fullest play.

These, sir, are some of the reflections which sprung up in my mind on the broken reading, I have as yet had, of your public letters. It is to *you*, and to you only, I communicate them, and that according to your desire. I have made them singly with a view to the splendour of your glory through successive ages. If, as is said, there is an adaptation in the contents of your letters, to the recovery, by your family, of departed power, I cannot recognize it. I lament that any prejudices are existing to weaken the estimation by the public of the most exalted excellence.—They will relax under the just encomiums pronounced by the impartial, when they would be rivetted by the egotism expressed by the interested—May they give



way in respect to yourself and your family, till you shall become as dear to the American people as were the Medici to the Italians.

If the reflections I have offered are of no weight, I may be the more easily convinced for having an inclination to be converted. If, on the contrary they are of any strength, you may receive them in season to be serviceable.

In my humble opinion, your remarks on Hamilton's pamphlet should have been untinctured with asperity. "He who renders full justice to his enemy shall have friends to adore him." The shaft which is tinged with gaul, thrown by what hand it will, can never pierce like Ithuriel's spear. Is the character of Lord Mansfield less esteemed because he was a mark for the polished arrows of Junius? You were raised higher above the reach of envy or malice. Your expressions censuring Gen. Hamilton which occasioned him to write his "*most famous letter*," were uttered confidentially to Mr. Pickens, and Mr. McHenry, and by the latter, as you suppose, were dishonourably betrayed to Hamilton. You said no more than was exacted by the duty of your station, and consequently nothing unallowable. The de-



mands made by Hamilton were very indefinite, and unauthorised by the laws of honour. These truths would not perish in oblivion—the mists in which they have been obscured, will be dissipated ; and, the public will yield their minds to their just operation. “Nothing,” says an acute observer “is more impartial than the stream-like public ; always the same and never the same ; of whom, sooner or later each misrepresented character obtains justice, and each calumniated, honour.” Another, less known to fame, but not less accurate in his remarks, observes :—“Talents which are before the public, have nothing to dread from the transient misrepresentations of party spleen or envy. In spite of opposition from any cause, their buoyant spirit will lift them to their proper grade.” “The man who comes fairly before the world, and who possesses the great and vigorous stamina which entitles him to a niche in the temple of glory has no reason to dread the ultimate result ; he will, in the end, most indubitably receive that distinction.”

With veneration and affection, I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*



## LETTER XLII.

FITCHBURG, *July 24, 1809.**Dear Sir,*

To my letter of the 30th ult. I have not been favoured with an answer. I feel an uncertainty from which I wish to be relieved, whether that letter got to your hands.

What is this new freak of England? Can it be, that we are only acting a farce of "Who's the Dupe?" If so, we will stop the play, and exhibit "Venice Preserved, or the Plot Discovered." Can she think, that if we refuse to march directly to a point, she can bring us to it by carrying us, *nolens volens*, through Pemicco into Holborn, and through Pall mall into Finsbury square? Can she think, that, after the manner of a Persian Monarch, she can crop off our noses and that we will remain content because our heads are spared? We must consider our country as our parent, and, in any difficulty, we must be emulous towards it of the conduct of the son of Anchises towards his father. Or, like Manlius, we will give to its accuser the option of death, or its exemption from dishonour.

Mr. Erskine's letters, though a more full, may



have even a less faithful sign of friendship, than Cressida's glove given to Troilus on her departure from Troy from the Grecian Camp—  
*Ubi jus incertum, ibi jus nullum.*

With veneration, &c.

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

## LETTER XLIII.

QUINCY, July 31, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

I received in season your favour of the 30th June as well as that of July 24th, and thank you for both.

The first is full of the candour and frankness of true friendship, and deserves my mature consideration. I have not been able to answer it, for I have been very busy, and my son's destination and preparations for departure, have claimed all my attention. It is an heartrending stroke to me. I may see him no more. I hope his absence will not be long. *Aristides is banished because he is too just.* HE WILL NOT LEAVE AN HONESTER OR ABLER MAN BEHIND HIM.



I am in a fair way to give my criticks and enemies food enough to glut their appetites. They spit their venom and hiss like serpents. But no facts are denied, no arguments confuted. I take no notice of their billingsgate. Let it boil and broil. I have had their secret hatred for ten years, for twenty years, for all my life indeed. And I had rather have their open hostility than their secret. I never hoped for mercy from *British Bears and Tory Tigers*. Their system would lead this country to misery and I will not follow it.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. Cunningham.*

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## LETTER XLIV.

FITCHBURG, *Aug. 9, 1809.*

*Dear Sir,*

I duly received your favour of the 31st ult. The separation from you of your son, would be, I knew, as painful to you both as was the parting of Paris and Priam, when the son took leave of the Father for Lacademon;



"British Bears and Tory Tigers" are not intended for an indiscriminate application to the Federalists. From the manner in which, in your letters, you have spoken of Mr. Jay, Judge Chase, Judge Dana and others, it is evident that you consider many of the Federalists as Hesperian Dragons guarding the tree of Liberty. But *Bears and Tigers*, of whatever cast or Country, which are like

"That mad Bull, whom Marcius lets loose,  
On each occasion, when he'd make Rome feel him,  
To toss our laws and liberties in the air,"

I would most freely join you in hunting down:

I shall forbear troubling you with any farther remarks on your public letters. No one can enter more deeply into your true situation. I know the zeal, and ardour, and extent, and constancy, and disinterestedness, of your exertions, to stretch out to your country safe leading strings for her infancy, in circulating lessons to guard her childhood and to give her, at last, the stamina of sound maturity.

Perceiving, at first, that your determination to publish, originated in circumstances which



would put all the virtues of the Man, and all the greatness of the first Character in the Nation, to the severest trial, I gazed with eagerness on the spectacle. And, it may be, because my fears fluttered too much in a sense of our infirmities; or, that my expectations of a finished example were so sanguinely set as to make me too vigilant of a failing, that I thought I saw it—as too eager a gaze on a brilliant spotless mirror, will soon stamp it somewhere with a proof of the imperfection of our sight. I have another apology. At a conversation; to which I have before referred, you said of Hamilton, that you had confided a son to his instruction—that when Vice-President, you was *ex officio*, connected with him in the commission on the sinking fund, and that your concurrence with him was indispensably required to enable him to carry his measures against Mr. Jefferson, another commissioner—and you was totally confounded in any attempt to explain his conduct in his letter concerning you, aside from supposing it the offspring of a brain distempered with ambition—on this passion you descanted, and ended your remarks upon him, with the



expression of an hope that he was sincere in the professions of his last hour ; and, turning your eyes upwards, you breathed a desire for his forgiveness—and acceptance.

The breaking out of a stifled resentment is generally like the springing of a cork from a bottle of porter—it is sudden, and the whole contents come foaming after it. This, you know, is the accusation made against you ; but with whatever degree of malice this accusation may be made, you can render it harmless as the viper, which hung for a moment on the hand of Paul. I think, with Seneca, that “ a wise man is out of the reach of fortune, but not free from the malice of it ; and all attempts upon him are no more than the arrows of Xerxes ; they may darken the day, but they cannot strike the sun. There is nothing so holy, as to be privileged against sacrilege. But, to strike and not to wound, is anger lost ; and he is invulnerable who is struck and not hurt. His resolution is tried ; the waves may dash themselves upon a rock, but not break it. Temples may be profaned and demolished, but the Deity still remains untouched.”



Your letters, if they are not history, they are nearly allied to history ; in this view of them, together with the certainty of their transmission to future times, they ought not, and I trust they will not lack, nor contain any thing to deprive them of an association with the memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz, and Duke of Sully, described by Blair, as the only works of this kind, which approach to the usefulness and dignity of history.

I have read your last letter to Perley. It is well known that you draughted the Constitution of the Commonwealth, but I have no remembrance of your making before a public confession of it. Your opinion must have great weight in settling any point of controversy.

If you have seen Ramsay's Life of Washington you noticed that the Biographer glided into the error you have lately exposed. He says :— " No sooner had the United States armed, than they were treated with respect, and an *indirect* communication was made, that France would accommodate all matters in dispute on reasonable terms :—Mr. Adams embraced these overtures." It was certainly right to have an error



corrected which was spreading its roots through our histories.

With veneration, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

### LETTER XLV.

[This letter was returned by Mr. A's positive request. The evidence that such a letter was written, is, the envelope, superscribed in Mr. A's hand writing and bearing his frank together with the mail marks of the Quincy Post Office. Its contents and character may be inferred from the allusions and quotations in Mr. C's answer which follows.] Post mark Aug. 14, 1809.

### LETTER XLVI.

FITCHBURG, *August 18, 1809.*

*Dear Sir,*

The last mail brought me your favour of the 8th of July with a postscript of the 13th inst. Whether you had received my letter of the 9th inst. does not appear by your fa-



your. You request the return of the letter, to yourself uncopied—you will find it inclosed, but if you have no particular reasons to the contrary, you would oblige me by entrusting it to my possession. It contains many things which I admire, and many before unknown to me.

I regret that my suggestions have cut out so much work for your reflections; but, you will own, that when you asked my opinion, I was bound in the fidelity of friendship to give it to you freely and fully; and it is a satisfaction to me, that, you are sensible of the sincerity of my affection.

The thoughts I have given you on your public Letters, have all been shaped in a situation to make me timid of their soundness. Feeling myself restrained from the right, if I had the opportunity, of consulting others, I have sent you my opinions direct from the place of their conception, without a swadling cloth, a tunic, or a pin from any other hand. It is not common that a judgment is made up and communicated upon an important subject, without a previous interchange of thoughts, or without examining how it comes out from the menstruum of other men's minds.



The motives for your writing, as you unfold them to me, are deserving of all regard—"To abash the guilty—to humble the insolent—to expose the nakedness of folly, and to strip the mask from the visage of knavery," are subjects rising in importance above every other, in a pure Republic.

After I had noticed in some of your public Letters, some reflections upon the Senate, I reviewed the reasons for its institution; and have collated the thoughts of many civilians upon such a branch in Government, particularly Sir William Blackstone's. According to your letter now before me, you consider the country reduced, by the Senate, to the condition of the Kilshonites, who were anathematized for the refusal of their help. I may coincide with you on this subject, but the contrary opinion was too deliberately imbibed to be inconsiderately abandoned. If it be a "Fortress of exclusive party," and a "Barrier against moderation and impartiality," (and experience is your lecturer, while reason only is mine) may you not be an unheeded Capys, nor an unsuccessful Laocoon, when you warn of its dangers, and when you smite its sides.



Of the prostitution of power to the brutal purposes of sensual gratification, we know, to the disgrace of our nature, of too many instances. Such gross declension is more shocking among an infant people, than among nations grey in crime; as vice is more odious in a youth than in a hardened sinner. In this view, I think it most lamentable, that in your opinion "*the panegyrical orations of Ames and Otis*—and the "*Funeral made by the bankers in Boston*" for Hamilton, exceeded in atrocity and impiety, the King's brothel of Belview, and the Adonian Temple of Madame Du Barry.

You say, "*I know not the history of this man.*" I certainly do not if your portrait shews his lineaments.

The "*infidelity of the worst kind, propagated by him in our Army, when in the family of Washington,*" I am unacquainted with.

You say I have never read Hamilton's pamphlet, &c. It was circulated, at first, among his confidential friends, one of whom, Judge Bourne, lent it to me the day he received it.

You have, indeed, been the target for the poisoned arrows and chewed balls of malice,



envy, and revenge. It is the unfailing lot of all greatness to be so.

In answering your letter, I have reserved to the last the concupiscence of Hamilton.

Knowing the impetus you felt when speaking of Hamilton, I have been fearful whether you would not get into too hot a temper, and thus disease your rebukes with the fever of animosity. I have thought that you would have been safer to have followed Plato, and to have said, "Speusippus, do you beat that fellow, for I am angry." But, sir, you set him before me in new and horrid odiousness. Of "*his debaucheries in New-York and Philadelphia*"—of "*his audacious and unblushing attempts upon ladies of the highest rank and purest virtue*"—of "*the indignation with which he has been spurned*"—and of "*the inquietude he has given to the first families,*" I never before heard a word. By this he was infamous as Caligula, when he told Asiaticus, in public, what kind of a bed-fellow was his wife."—And as insolent as the Duke of Orleans when he took the Duke of Burgundy into his cabinet embellished with the portraits of the women he had enjoyed, among which the



picture of the Dutchess of Burgundy was conspicuously placed. If he was all this he was abandoned beyond reclamation—Candor and charity must be dumb in his excuse—Avouch, sir, all this to be true, and I shall consider myself bound by all my duties to my family, to virtue, to my country and to heaven, to dress him in a suit from the devil's wardrobe, and hold him up to the execration of mankind. Cato valued himself on his integrity, and was, it is said, addicted to intemperance; but the friends of Cato prized him so highly for his main excellence, that they looked upon his occasional intoxication with indulgence. Thus I have understood it of Hamilton—he set the estimation made of his uprightness against that which might be formed from the confession of his lewdness, and he determined that the weight of his cardinal virtues would preponderate over every defect, and forever keep that scale immovably down. But could he think—would any body believe, that his peculation, if true, as insinuated in an ephemeral “History of the United States for the year 1796,” was a crime less aggravated than the robbery of virtue of its



unbought, invaluable and irredeemable possession? Vain dependence on the clemency of mankind!

In his "Remarks, explanatory of his conduct, motives and views," in meeting Burr, written the day before the interview—and in his will, he speaks with the most moving tenderness of his "Wife and Children." In his last hour, according to Dr. Moore, he was collected, tranquil, and resigned as Addison—If there had ever been a ————— I should be confounded.

With veneration, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

N. B. There are some parts of your Letter unnoticed in my answer. I had not time to examine it so minutely as I want to—I have almost a mind to detain it for your second thoughts, or until I write again. If you will favour me with its farther use, I will, if you should wish it, send you a duplicate.

W. C.

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## LETTER XLVII.

[This letter was returned by the express in-junctions of Mr. A. Its existence and contents



rest upon the same evidence as letter 45. Post-mark Aug. 25, 1809.]

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### LETTER XLVIII.

FITCHBURG, *Sept. 9, 1809.*

*Dear Sir,*

On our way home from Quincy, we were detained by the kindness of friends until last evening. Of the pleasant events of our excursion, none are recollected with more delight than the attention we received at your house, nor have I to express my obligations to any but yourself, for any part of the secret history you orally communicated. Your letter of the 22d ult. I received with the seal unviolated, and agreeably to your injunctions, and my promise at parting with you, I enclose it.

"Integrity," as I used the term in application to Hamilton, was not to be understood in the common acceptation. In that acceptation it barely rises to a virtue, for it is wholly equivocal whether it be the effect of any innate goodness, or produced by the restraints of law, and by calculations of advantage; considerations which keep many knaves from the crimes of theft, robbery, &c. and which give to such a suspicious



anxiety to shine in the varnish of an opposite reputation. Of all the qualities of a virtuous soul, pure integrity is the brightest—it takes no counsel from human law, nor from even the common propensities of our nature ; the perfection from which it emanated, is its sole example and security—of this divine virtue, you have shewn me that Hamilton was totally destitute.

His Religion, as has been the case with thousands, might have been accommodated to political changes—I thank you for pointing me to the winding in the labyrinth from which his ostentation of religion sprang. Of his lubricity, what an odious picture you have drawn ? Oh ! he was too foul for “ablution by all the waters of Zemzem.” I have not time and am too much fatigued to say more.

You propose to give me an account of “his talents and services in another letter.” I wish to see a connected chain of these services, and their magnitude ; since it has been announced by Coleman that years are to be occupied by some best gifted genius in penning his life.

With veneration, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*



## LETTER XLIX.

FITCHBURG, *Sept.* 23, 1809.*Dear Sir,*

My letter of the 9th inst. had an enclosure, which it is so interesting to myself, as well as you, that it should get to your possession, that I cannot suppress my solicitude to be advised of its safe reception.

The present covers the last National *Ægis*, in which you will find your juvenile letter to your friend Webb, which I have caused to be inserted in that paper according to your intimations on the first of the month.

If, in the introduction, I have not mounted to your just encomium, I have some refuge against mortification, in the knowledge, that a perfect delineation of greatness can be the work of none but a master's hand—and, I have more than this refuge in the consciousness of a disposition to lift you to your just grade.

I capitalized the prophetic parts of the letter, which have been fulfilled; and italicized the Latin, neither of which were done in the *Anthology*. But with all my care, the Printers disregarded the Latin word, *diræ*, and used, as



the Anthology had done before them, the English word *dire*, and direfully it looks—The works of an author are so frequently garbled at the press, and his feelings disturbed by its orthographical inaccuracies, that even the case-men should be something above mechanicks.

Three days of this week, I was absent on a journey to Boston. I passed some hours at the Athenæum, and at the office of its founder, with even more satisfaction than I had anticipated—An enterprise of so much utility, originating in the foresight and public spirit of Mr. Shaw, and seconded by his urbanity, industry and exactness, cannot fail of reaching a point that will give him an immortality of renown.

With veneration, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*



## LETTER L.

QUINCY, *Sept. 27, 1809.*

*Dear Sir,*

Yesterday I received your favour of the 23d and had before in its season received



that of the 9th in good order, its enclosure unviolated.

My boyish letter to Dr. Nathan Webb appeared with more propriety in a Worcester paper than any where else. *It is demonstrative evidence* THAT JOHN ADAMS' DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WAS ONE AND TWENTY YEARS OLDER THAN THOMAS JEFFERSON'S. To understand my letter it is necessary to have lived at the time when it was written, when we were so angry with Great Britain for misconducting American affairs, and for leaving us exposed to the murders and depredations of French and Indians, that from my heart I wished we were independent of her, and left to ourselves to take care of our enemies, or perish in the struggle.

I presume the Latin word should be "dira" the "dreadful things" "the horrors" of war.—I remember the word "dire," and direful and dira were very fashionable among the boys in College, out of which I had just before migrated. but enough of this childish business. The thing is an oddity, that's all. You have made enough and more than enough of it, in your introduction.



Mr. Shaw's Athenæum is an honour to Boston, to Massachusetts and to North America, and I hope no Tory Junto will be able to deprive him of the honour of it. Yet he and his Athenæum are too much under their thumbs. *Poor Democrats, Republicans and still poorer Americans, are at the feet of John Bull and his Calves. Matters cannot be much longer minced. The truth must out.*

With regard, &c.

I am your friend and relation,

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. William Cunningham, Jr.*

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## LETTER LI.

FITCHBURG, Oct. 17, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

Your favour of the 27th ult. arrived when I was at Worcester, attending a session of the Supreme Court, to get some redress for a most gross and injurious fraud. Immediately on my return, I set out for Boston, whence I returned last evening. These jaunts have occasioned this delay in the acknowledgment of your letter.



*“Poor Democrats, Republicans, and still poorer Americans, are,”* you say, *“at the feet of John Bull and his Calves.”* Were I convinced of this, I would, as you have done, give it registry in my mind, and “every day I’d turn the leaf to read it”—and like you, I would spare no labour to “strew it in the common ear.” But if the apprehension of this be only “the strong and swelling evil of your conception,” then should I sorrow at seeing its currency rendered irresistible by the authority of your august name. On so trite and so sharply contested a subject, the arguments are embodied for the use of either side. I have frequently passed them in review, and although it is evident that pride, and policy, and the insatiable spirit of revenge, can operate on Great Britain to induce her to attempt an ascendancy in this country, yet that the Federalists (the calves of the Bull) are estranged from their own country in subserviency to the views of England, is an idea, in my present opinion, every way inadmissible. I have seen too much virtue, too much intelligence, and too much patriotism employed in the contrivance and in the prosecution of the Federal plan, to take, as yet,



so ungrateful an impression. As a corollary to this accusation, the Federalists are denominated Monarchists. But Elliot, who wrote after he had been initiated into the secrets of Democracy, says in his tenth letter, "Monarchical principles are confined to a few individuals in our country, and among those individuals may be placed some of our most ardent Republicans." I acquit alike the Republicans and the Federalists from any fondness for Monarchy, though I do believe that this system will be engendered in our abuses of a milder form; and when it comes, it will come in chastisement of our negligence, as any hateful visitation, which, with due precaution, could have been avoided.

Every party, in every country, have, says Paley, a vocabulary of cant phrases and unmeaning terms, which they use to mislead the multitude—What a pity, that so fair a country should be rent asunder by such a jargon, and that she wants the knowledge necessary to enable her to repose with confidence and security, on the fundamental and scientific principles which can alone uphold her liberty and her peace? In one of your letters to Kalkoen, you



vindicated your countrymen against a devotion to persons—were they deserving the character you gave them in that letter, they would have, in their capacity, a better safeguard for their liberties, than would have resulted from any stratagem the framers of their constitution could have invented.

It is owing to the profound respect I pay to your opinions, that I am put to a pause on the question, whether the influence of England is so extensive and deadly as you imagine ; but I should be unfit for the examination ; if this respect could unsettle the independency of my own judgment. You see that I am claiming my share of the applause bestowed by you on all the Americans in the abovementioned letter to Kalkoen. If in general, an independency of thought were freely indulged, not in the obstinacy of ignorance, not in the more unmanageable inveteracy of party, nor in the disgusting affectation of wisdom, but in the calmness and confidence of a good intention, and of plain common sense, there would be but one party of the people. Such was your conclusion when you addressed



the Dutch civilian. But the misfortune is, that faction fattens on the soil of freedom, like the steed turned loose in clover, and is the more untractable for its better fare. To take another comparison : Faction buzzes over the body which gave it birth, and devours it, as the bees, according to Virgil's story of their production, fasten on, and become glued with the vitiated juices of the stag—and after the manner of these bees, in another stage of their history, faction, when it comes to its own strife, settles it with a king. The materials of such a faction constantly exist in the causes of government, but it is systematized and put in motion, either by those who are

“ So weary with disasters, so tugg'd with fortune,  
That they'd set their life on any chance  
To mend it, or be rid on't,”

or by those

“ Whom the wild blows and buffets of the world  
Have so incens'd, that they're reckless what  
They do.”

You have fully and forcibly described the impulse by which the heads of a faction are hurried on, in your examination of Needham's right Constitution of a Commonwealth, as I find it in the



third Vol. of your defence of the Constitutions of the United States, page 278, London edition. *“Continuation of power,”* you observe, *“in the same persons and families, will as certainly take place in a simple Democracy, or a Democracy by representation, as in an hereditary aristocracy, or monarchy—The continuation will be certain, but it will be accomplished by corruption, which is worse than a continuation by birth ; and if corruption cannot effect the continuation, sedition and rebellion will be resorted to : FOR A DEGRADED, DISAPPOINTED, RICH AND ILLUSTRIOUS FAMILY WOULD, AT ANY TIME, ANNIHILATE HEAVEN AND EARTH, IF IT COULD, RATHER THAN FAIL OF CARRYING ITS POINT.”*

In a sentence which follows, you suggest a truth which would overcome in the great bulk of mankind, every obstacle to their being slaves of a chief, rather than supporters of their country, for “it becomes,” you say, “more profitable and respectable too, except with a very few, to be a party man than a public spirited one.” And these are the reasons why a faction is always ostentatious, and why men grow into consequence who are of no greater worth.



than Carr and Villiers,—and which make, indeed, braggarts in politics of men, empty, enthusiastic, visionary and outrageous, as were Bell, Maxfield and Nelson, converts to the Wesleyan system of divinity—which make in fine, imaginary adepts in politics, of such fairies as “Pease-blossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustard-seed.”—

“ Our country sinks beneath the yoke :  
It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash  
Is added to her wounds.”

If these cuts of misfortune could serve us like the bite of Virgil’s *Culex* on the Shepherd, to warn us of the coming serpent, we should wake and stand on our defence. But it will not be so; for these dangers do not hiss till their deleterious power has unnerved the people; but they allure like the Siren, singing till the moment of destruction.

Whether I am right or wrong in the view I take of our situation, I can satisfy myself in no other way than by retrospecting our history. To give you this review, would resemble an attempt to enrich an alcove with an imperfect copy of its own contents. I shall therefore,



with one or two exceptions, pass it over, intermixing with the little I shall recapitulate such reflections as I think are authorized by some acquaintance with the progress and fate of empires.

The war with England caused much political investigation; but it was soon perceived, that our most popular conclusions were rather compliments to the overweening vanity of all scio-lists, than resting substantially on the true character of man, and on the sound principles in the science of civil government.

Several of our State Constitutions are strongly marked with the crudities of immature reflection. At the time of forming the National constitution, we had all, in imagination, become Lycurguses; and in public virtue we were all Catos. Yet with all our boasted wisdom and virtue, the instrument proposed to our consideration, for acceptance or rejection, did but just escape negation; and in my opinion, the exceptionable parts were the most necessary, and, of course, the most faultless. It was constructed for a wise and virtuous people; and what Anacharsis said of all laws when applied to the powerful,



might be safely said of this constitution, that it was slender as a spider's web for the government of any other people than such as performed more than half the work of government by the natural tameness of their tempers, and efficacy of their private examples. It went into operation under the most fortunate auspices ; and if any one great object of a public nature, more than another in which he was engaged, engrossed the mind of Washington, it was to give it such an outset as should ensure it a safe, an unbiassed, a dignified and a prosperous course ; such a course as should wring from its enemies more than their confession of its success—*their own undeviating pursuit of it.*

Soon after the coming in of Mr. Jefferson, I saw the growing mountain of our greatness shake by the turning of his body ; and I was satisfied his uneasiness would continue till he had shattered it into fragments. These fears were strengthened by the corresponding alarms you did me the honour to communicate. It is not necessary to pursue the steps of our declension any lower—to a prophet reclining on the page of history, and embracing within his view



the little space which has been occupied with our experiment, our end would be neither a difficult nor a distant prospect. The same history which authorizes the prediction of our close, gives the lessons by which all we have lost might be regained and kept ; but they will be disregarded. It stands before me visible, as in its vicinity is the aspiring *Ætna*, that our country, from the quantity and variety of its concealed combustibles, is doomed to undergo as violent and as awful convulsions, as those with which any people were ever cursed. If these calamities are not to be averted, the only remaining advantage in our power, is to procrastinate their coming.—To mitigate their fury would be impracticable ; every thing will be done in a delirium which gathers equal aggravation from all attempts to assuage it, as from the most angry opposition. In the contemplation of these calamities by the true lover of his country, whether he view them as near or distant, every other consideration dwindles in comparison with that of his obligation to the Commonwealth : and he only can be the real and approved friend of his country, who comes



to her altar with the offering, if need be, of his Isaac.

If government be a combination of the whole to repress the outbreakings of the disorderly, yet, with those who are, or with those who have been high in authority, this very government may be besieged, or used as an engine to give a more extended and a more pernicious influence to their own corruption. Such, if to such it were not in vain to moralize, might be told that

“The rarer action is  
In virtue than in vengeance.”

This is a general observation, connected with what precedes.

It appears by the last gazettes, that peace is likely to obtain between France and Austria. If peace be now desired by Buonaparte, it is because the harvest of war is gathered, and in the autumn of his Austrian affairs, the seeds can be scattered which, concealed under a winter's covering, can yet spread their roots, draw nutrition, and soon start afresh for another crop.—

“He speaks of peace, while covert enmity,  
Under the smile of safety, wounds the world.”



He looks with a more angry mein upon us, which is a natural consequence of his growing might. We must deal with him, and with every other aggressor, in something stouter than our statutes, which are like the ashes of a burnt rope, having the form but none of the power of the cord.—One of these strings of ashes was blown away by a proclamation, and we regarded the scattered dust as the Egyptians did the falling of the nectæ, when they thought they could go abroad in safety—But the plague returned.

In your letter to the printers of the Patriot, which was published last Wednesday, you refer to Judge Dana, as the only person living, who can explain the style of the correspondence between yourself and Vergennes. When I saw this reference, I could not but lament that you had bestowed so many encomiums upon the Judge whenever you introduced his name. I have not the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with Judge Dana, but I know his reputation as well as of any man in the state, and I know him to be deserving of all that you have said of him; but as you appear to depend upon



him to explain some passages in your despatches which have been made interesting, would not his representations be given and received with more satisfaction, had you noticed him with less attention? I beg you to pardon the freedom of this suggestion. I know not whether the doubt has occurred to any other person, but I confess, the instant I read the reference it sprung into my mind.

With veneration, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams,  
Quincy.*

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## LETTER LII.

QUINCY, Oct. 23, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

I thank you for your favour of the 17th.—I know the integrity, talents and intelligence of great numbers of the Federalists: and have no doubt of the good intentions of the great body of that party: but of a great number of their leaders, and the most active of them especially, I have no better opinion than I



have of some of the leaders of the Republicans. By their writings they have deceived the people into an affection and confidence in England, and an abhorrence of France; neither of which is well founded. The Funding system and Banking systems which are the work of the Federalists, have introduced more corruption and injustice, for what I know, than any other cause.

My confidence in Mr. Dana during the whole time we lived and acted together in Europe, ought not to have been concealed. I know that if he transmits to posterity any relation of the controversy between the Count De Vergennes and me, it must be founded on the letters that passed between us, which I possess as well as he. I can transmit it myself, if I should live: but as I care little about it, and it is not likely I shall live long enough to go through the plan I have in view, I shall probably leave it among a number of manuscript volumes, to be concealed forever from the public eye, or scattered and lost like the papers of Mr. Hancock and Mr. Samuel Adams. So many Federal lies have been published concerning the peace of



1783, that I was determined that all the papers relative to that transaction, should not be left for chance or cunning to mutilate or mangle.

With great regard,

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. Cunningham.*

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### LETTER LIII.

FITCHBURG, Oct. 28, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

I have received your favour of the 23d. The sentence from your letter of the 27th ult. which made the theme of my answer, I understood as being extended to the whole body of the Federalists. Several circumstances conspired to induce me to make of it an unqualified application to that party. I cannot, and it is unnecessary to recite them all—two or three shall suffice. In your letter to the printers of the Patriot of June 10th, in the enumeration of the “opposition and embarrassments you had to overcome” you inserted—“*from that large body of Americans who revere the English.*” In the review of the works of Fisher Ames, by



my friend John Q. Adams, I saw that Ames was considered as one of the principals of such a body—And in the answer of Mr. Jefferson of the 3d ult. to the address of the Republican Citizens of the City and County of New-York, I noticed a very plain insinuation that the opposition to the embargo, and its supplementary measures, was induced entirely by a predilection in the opposers for another country than their own. Laying these and many things of the same complexion together, I could not but regard the sentence I quoted from your last letter as coming, “point from point to the full arming of the verity,” that our country, the land of proud freemen, was become in great extent, but pasturage for the progeny of foreign kine.

In the letter on my table, you restrict the appellation of Calves of John Bull, to the Leaders of the Federalists, of a great number of whom you “have no better opinion than you have of some of the Leaders of the Republicans.” By which I understand, that we have “cockerels that crow as they have heard the old one,” as well as calves that roar in the tone



of the great Bull. How are these Leaders distinguished? This Commonwealth, and I learn it is so in other states, is under the most complete organization of party against party. There is on each side, a Central Committee, a County Committee, and a Town Committee, all combined, as a chain by its links, of which the first is the jar that gives the whole, by one touch, a shock. Trace these links up to this first and break it off, and the breach, like the division of a worm would not only heal, while crawling, but would immediately put out more length. And this system of "a wheel within a wheel," is so contrived, that its whole energy is derived from the multiplicity of the cogs which keep it in operation—officers or Leaders are more numerous than in our militia, and are much better fitted for service. The one who was raised to the rank of *the* leader of the Federalists, has been five years dead. It was said, that "from his metal was his party steel'd," yet there appears to be no lack of sagacity nor of industry to carry on the system, now that he is gone; nor does it fail, notwithstanding he confessed himself to be one that could not cool his iron in



his own trough ; and notwithstanding you have since represented him as " without bottom in voluptuousness : " so bad that,

" Our wives, our daughters,  
Our matrons, and our maids, could not fill up  
The cistern of his lust, and his desire  
All continent impediments would o'erbear  
That did oppose his will."

With veneration, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

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## LETTER LIV.

QUINCY, Nov. 15, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

I have received your favour of Oct. 28th.—I am very unexpectedly involved in occupations and correspondencies very disproportioned to the feeble forces remaining to a man of seventy-four, and which make it impossible for me to reply to the various important subjects of your letter.

With usual esteem, your friend

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. Cunningham.*



## LETTER LV.

FITCHBURG, Nov. 18, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

Since my last of the 28th ult. I have not had the pleasure to hear from you. I lately received some information concerning you, which I deem it a duty of friendship to communicate. I had it from one of the supreme Junta residing at the "Head quarters of good principles." It is of a confidential nature though no secrecy was imposed—and is, that yourself and Mr. Gray are to be the candidates for the first and second offices in the Commonwealth. I have no doubt but you will find that "a bush lim'd for you." The information was probably given to me with a view to obtain my opinion whether you would allow yourself to be a candidate. I have not given an opinion, nor could I, although acquainted with the objections you made last year to Mr. John Q. Adams' being a candidate, speak any other way than hypothetically upon the subject.

If the project now agitated in the upper Chamber of the Caucus, by those who keep 'the body and the limbs of this great sport to-



gether," should not be shoved aside by any new occurrence in the rapid versatility of events, you may depend on being soon sounded on this affair.

The sayings and doings of one party, seem to be to the other but "stuff to make paradoxes." It may so appear in this case, but I believe the intention is, really, if possible, to tranquilize the Commonwealth by some greater unanimity in the designation of the first Magistrate. All I can say to yourself about it is what Ulysses said to Agamemnon:—You are one "in whom the tempers and the minds of all should be shut up." Could this confidence be effected by your presidency over the counsels of the Commonwealth, there is no consideration of a private nature that ought to get the ascendancy over your obligations to your country. In no other view could I suppose your election auspicious to your peace or glory—in any other you would be happier as Atticus than as Cicero.

I think there is some pith in the Letters of Cobbett to the King. The smuggled system of Internal navigation pursued by Buonaparte may, if unobstructed in its prosecution, prepare



a torpedo for the British Navy. Buonaparte has as much valour and forty times the prudence of Anthony—He will let others “go a ducking,” and continue the plan of “fighting foot to foot,” until he can reduce his enemy to a condition that he will not fear to take a chance with him at Actium or Salamis.

With veneration, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

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## LETTER LVI.

FITCHBURG, Nov. 22, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

I have received your favour of the 15th inst. It is no more than I expected, that your elucidations of the great transactions in which you were uninterruptedly engaged through the different periods of their existence, and in the making of which you have repeatedly had occasion to make personal allusions, would necessarily lead you into extensive correspondencies. I think I told you as much soon after you commenced your public letters. I



really hope that your life, and health, and vigour will be continued to you unimpaired to carry you through, and many years beyond, the completion of your design. I shall take care not to interrupt nor retard your progress with my speculations. If it is true that "we bring forth weeds when our quick winds lie still," you must bear abundantly of fruits, turned up so thoroughly as you are to ventilation—I wish you a great crop, and joy of the harvest. I know it would be unjust to yourself, and to your family, that you should be "the grave of your deserving." I have hinted, that you had better leave your life to the pen of some Comines, but if none but yourself can do yourself justice,

"'Twere a concealment  
Worse than death, no less than a traducement  
To hide your doings."

The expression in your letter of Sept. 27th, that "Poor Democrats," &c. "are at the feet of John Bull and his Calves," I should have let pass without objection, had I not thought it more chargeable with inconsistency than impropriety. By causing your letters to Kalkoen



to form a part of your present communications to the public, they are, I think, to be regarded as containing your present sentiments.

A subject of great delicacy I have thought I would take the liberty to mention. It is no less than to offer you some advice respecting your treatment of Hamilton, when you shall again resume the consideration of his conduct. It is a transgression of a rule to give counsel unasked, but I am stimulated beyond subjection to rules by what was suggested to me by your son, when I was at Quincy. He said that when you entered again on that topic "*the little*" (using some harsh epithet) "would have it," meaning, undoubtedly, that he would be lashed with severity. But, my dear sir, if you mean to give weight to your animadversions, should they not be stated with calmness and candour? Let it be admitted that he deserved to be treated as a stigmatic—let it be admitted that he took the example of Semiramis for proof that sensuality was connected with talents for governing, but recollected from the same example, that it may be the associate of injustice and inhumanity—let it be admitted, that the marble mausoleum



erected to his memory in New-York, should wear nothing but the indecent figures that Sesostris ordered to be sculptured on certain pyramids—let it be admitted that he was officious, assuming, ambitious and a libeller, yet injured as you feel yourself, what point can you possibly give your pen beyond a very candid and unruffled statement of such facts as will conduct the public mind to a just determination? Such a determination cannot eventually be avoided. This truth should be your consolation. It is the consolation of integrity, and the affliction of vice, that “the final impartiality of the public” will appear through every art that can be employed to blacken or to brighten. Pardon, great sir, this freedom—if you judge me rude—judge me friendly. “There is a silence of such magnitude, energy, decision, as to be singly worth a whole life of some men.”—I did regret that you broke this silence with regard to the person in view; but as I have no right to judge until I shall see the *finale*, I shall suspend my conclusion, and I hope to be satisfied, that in breaking it, you imparted to your countrymen the *coup d’œil*, enabling them distinctly



to discern, even through the mists of party, the abode of truth.

With veneration, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams,  
Quincy.*

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### LETTER LVII.

QUINCY, Nov. 29, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

I return you the enclosed letter, according to your desire. No eye but mine has seen it, and no copy of it, or any part of it has been taken.

Whatever my son said to you, he said it by guess. He knows nothing of my plan. You need be under no concern. If I should live to make mention again of the gentleman, which is not very probable, I shall be very mild with him.

I could not give an adequate idea of my transactions in Holland without inserting in their place the letters of Dr. Kalkoen. The publication of those, or any other, letters of mine



written thirty years ago, by no means implies that I am of the same opinion now. Many things that I then thought correct may not appear so now, original documents will be scanned by historians.

The inconsistencies you mention are merely imaginary, as might be shewn : but our opinions differ so widely, and upon so many points, that the discussion would require more time than I can possibly spare.

I have received another letter from you, containing a hint from a Junto or a Junta man. Which Junta he belongs to you do not say. You may easily imagine that a Republican would dress up a man of straw to divide the Federalists, or vice versa, a Federalist would evoke a ghost to divide the Republicans. But this is too ridiculous a story for me to write a word more about it.

I am, dear sir,

Your friend and humble servant.

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. Cunningham.*



## LETTER LVIII.

FITCHBURG, *Dec. 9, 1809.**Dear Sir,*

I am indebted to you for your favour of the 29th ult.

It appears, that you think our opinions as opposite "as the south to the Septentrion." I am not sensible of so much odds, but be the difference what it may, when I gave you my impressions, I was bound in honour to be indifferent whether they would carry one into the southern or northern region of your opinion. I well know that no favour is so ungraciously received as the pure offering of friendship. Aware of this, Shakspeare has, in most of his colloquies where the severity of kindness should be displayed, assigned its performance to the Fool, from whom nothing offends.

You inform me that I need be under no concern about your future treatment of Hamilton. The anxiety I have felt on that subject, has not been on his account. As it respects him, and every other public character, living or dead, I should have no objection to having



the casket of their deserts "unpeg'd upon the house's top."

I am Sir, your most obliged friend,

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

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### LETTER LIX.

FITCHBURG, Dec. 29, 1809.

*Dear Sir,*

When I wrote to you of the 9th inst. I did not expect that I should again trouble you; nor did I look for an answer. To this hour, I can very truly assure you, that the contents of your letters are unknown to any human being but myself, excepting those to whom they were known before their transmission to me. But believing that you are overleaping the sentiments you used to embrace and inculcate, in the pursuit of some new design, or to gratify a resentment, I wish myself enlarged from your injunctions. And since I have seen and examined the Message of Mr. Madison at the opening of the present session of Congress, and the documents accompanying it, I can hardly per-



suade myself, that my obligations to you are paramount to those which I owe my country.

I will shew you, in a very brief analysis of your letters, wherein their disclosure would subserve the great purpose of overcoming the prejudices against one country, and of the partialities to another, which have already exhausted our treasury, enfeebled us to a condition that we are become the very sport of the nation we would befriend—the contempt of the one we would injure, and which are about to ingulph us in an unjustifiable and a devouring war. The candour which would forbear this censure any longer, is itself censurable.

It appears by your Letters to me in the years 1803 and 1804 that you declared yourself in possession of certain facts concerning Mr. Jefferson which, for the reasons you assigned, you were averse to communicating by Letter—That you encouraged me to arraign, “at the Bar of Reason,” the Administration of Mr. Jefferson, and censured the Federalists for their inactivity. That you very intelligently hinted, that you could verbally supply me with some materials for the manufacture of strictures—



And that you very seriously declared of Mr. Jefferson, that he was under the government of the two most unfriendly passions to the liberties of a people, that can possibly reign in the bosom of a magistrate—"A MEAN THIRST OF POPULARITY, AND AN INORDINATE AMBITION." What, sir, but avariciousness of popularity, and insatiable ambition, have been the causes of all the tyranny with which the world has been cursed? It will farther appear by your Letters, that so recently as September 1808, you passed judgment decidedly against much, nay against the most, of the management during the Jeffersonian dynasty. And it appears that subsequently to the last date, and after you had thrown off your aversion to an appearance on the public stage, you exonerated Mr. Jefferson, directly or virtually, of every allegation which had been preferred against him. Besides these things, the Letters first mentioned contain much anti-democratical doctrine. And your Letter of the 22d June, contains a most unfortunate confession. You therein say, that your "Daughter-in-law, on a particular occasion, exclaimed, "I know sir, that your two sons are very much delighted



that you have taken the subject up"—"This" you add, "I knew as well as she did." This confession is unfortunate, insomuch as it broadens the ground for the suspicion of an ascendancy of you by your sons, which stood on the public conduct of the eldest of them. It is not absent from me, that you lately told me that your son now with you, knows nothing of your plan, but surely he will not think himself complimented by an assurance, that he is much delighted with what he knows nothing of. Neither his filial affection, nor his confidence in you, can deserve a compliment of this extent.

I agree with Burke, "that no government ever yet perished from any other direct cause than its own weakness." And I agree with you, where you say, in your "Defence of the Constitutions of the United States,"—"It has been the common people, and *not the gentlemen*, who have established simple monarchies all over the world. The common people, *against the gentlemen*, established a simple monarchy in Cæsar at Rome, in the Medici at Florence, and are now in danger of doing the same thing in Holland." They have done it. And are they



not in danger of doing the same thing in America? An excellent writer you observed in the "Defence," "said, somewhat incautiously, that people will never oppress themselves, or invade their own rights." "This compliment," say you, "if applied to human nature, or to mankind, or to any nation or people in being or in memory, is more than has been merited—If it should be admitted, that a people will not unanimously agree to oppress themselves, it is as much as is ever, and more than is always true." Now sir, with letters of the complexion I have mentioned, and with such concessions, the fullest ever made, of the fickleness of the multitude, added to the peculiar circumstances of the times, I appeal to you as to a Patriot, and demand what shall I do? Since the appearance of the Message, and Documents, I have turned this question over and over in my mind. I have examined every side and each end of it—When patriotism gives me counsel, it is difficult to find enough in my affection for you to dissuade me against its importunity—When I consult the claim of affection, I think on those who have sacrificed their Children for their Country. Are



we more under the calves of John Bull than when George Washington was President, John Adams, Vice-President, and John Jay, Chief Justice? Are we, suffer me with all plainness to ask, are we nearly so much under that calfish influence as when you yourself was President? I build this enquiry on the arguments which you repeatedly and publicly employed, not only to overthrow the prejudice existing against Great Britain, but to shew *that she would not receive our voluntary submission*. Who, yourself excepted, ever went so far as this? Will you contend that what you have said, on this subject, to public bodies which addressed you, and what on the same subject you have said to me, are *imaginary contradictions*? I think it important to the public security, that they should have before them all the means which can enable them to determine whether there is not "an ~~un~~noble swerving." Should they perceive that there is, the errors you are disseminating may be prevented from finding root in a too easy credulity, or in the profound respect which has been imbibed for your name. And Manlius will be roused before the city shall



be taken. . There are, in your letters, many things of a *jocose*, of a *serious*, and of a very delicate nature, which I have no wish, nor any warrantable cause to let loose from confinement.

But in addition to reasons of a public nature, for wishing enlargement to some of the matter entrusted to my keeping, I have private reasons :—I do not know that I have an opinion on any political subject unsupported by your authority. I remember that in the year 1774 or 5, you made a visit to my Father's. I was then a small boy, but I have as strong a remembrance as if it was but yesterday, that I regarded with particular attention, the bag in which your hair was tied; and that it assisted to heighten my conception of your greatness. The bent of these conceptions I have followed from that time to this, and it would be an endless labour to recite the sentiments, written and oral, of yours, upon which most of my political speculations have been founded. I cannot omit the mention of an instance which strikingly confirms how well you thought I had profited by your instructions :—Entering your room in the year 1804, you accosted me *Hume*, and attribut-



ed to me the pieces which at that time appeared with that signature. I could not permit myself to enjoy the felicity of being supposed by you the writer of those numbers—you then extolled their contents, and pronounced them worthy a deathless meed. It is an inexplicable enigma, that you should have spoken as you did then, and write as you do now. Am I wrong, that I retain the opinions which were common to us both, or you in departing from them? But yet farther the retention by me exposes me to the unpleasant consequences of your disapprobation—this I feel as a cruelty. I cannot now enjoy your smiles without sacrificing my sentiments, and of this fact, of which I presume you are insensible, I will give you an admonitory example:—From an intimation that it would be agreeable to you to have your letter to Dr. Webb published in a Worcester Paper, I caused it to be there printed, with an introduction which I penned in the full flow of esteem. The letter, which you returned me in answer to the one in which I transmitted you the printed letter to Dr. Webb, is the only letter couched in the spirit of a genuine cordiality, which you have



written to me since, by your desire, I criticised your public letters—The admonition from this fact, you may take from one of the charges made against you by your great accuser. But the business with which you tasked me respecting your public letters, had no connexion with your panegyric—it lay altogether in the shades. I knew its performance was difficult, for I had not forgotten the speech of Symmachus to the Imperial Court ; but I expected a generous reception of what you had solicited, though I did not look for such remuneration as Henry IV. made to Sully when, in the transports of zeal for his master's honour, Sully rent in pieces the marriage articles which Henry had shamefully entered into with Henrietta d' Entragues ; and when he intimated that his master was a fool for having signed them. My comments were so evidently disagreeable to you that I discontinued them. In my letter of June 30th, which was the second I addressed to you after I received your enquiry, " Whether and wherein you had exposed yourself?" I proposed to suspend my remarks till I should receive some signification of your wish to have them continued—



the request never was renewed. I did afterwards, however, notice one or two things.— And now that I think of it, I say a word or two about Col. Pickering. In one of your public letters, you gave an account of an interview between yourself and one of the Heads of Departments, at which you attempted to pacify a dislike of your proceedings, which was unexpectedly manifested by a tender of resignation—with begging that none of the Heads of Departments would think of resigning—that you was perfectly satisfied, &c. Now in two or more of your letters to me, you assert or insinuate, that Pickering was unfit on the score of capacity, for Secretary of State, and that fact, you say or insinuate, was known to some few in the nation who had “winnowed him with a rough wind.” Such being your impression, at the time of the interview, was there no impropriety in your answer to the Secretary? I pretend not to know what the talents of Col. Pickering really are, but a certain Report of his, which I could not believe to have been penned by him, if destitute as you had described him, I questioned you about, but you never satisfied me



whether he was assisted in its composition, although you have ascribed to him the production of Washington's Address to Adet. I received your statements concerning him as correct, and answered you accordingly.

I made you a visit in the year 1792 in company with Mr. John Q. Adams. The floor of the room in which the company sat, was covered with a new painted canvass. The figures arrested attention, and it was concluded that the painting represented the street of some ancient city. Assenting with the rest, to this, you remarked, that the city which had such streets was not under the government of Selectmen; from which I drew the inference, that in your opinion, the objects of legislation, even within the limited circle of municipal authority could not be brought to any approach to perfection, without energy and order—How much more is an energetic regulation necessary to the attainment by a nation of all the advantages of civil rule?

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*



## LETTER LX.

FITCHBURG, Jan. 15, 1810.

*Dear Sir,*

I am without an answer to my last of the 29th ult. in which I observed, that a confession respecting your sons, made in your letter of the 22d of June, was unlucky, but I reserved for another letter, the principal fact, and the reflections upon it, which give that aspect to the acknowledgment alluded to.

If you will review the letter of the 8th of July, but which you detained in your own hands on account of its virulence, till the 13th of August, and then forwarded to me with directions to return it, you will find the following sentence:—"I should have gone to my grave without writing a word, if the very system of Hamilton, a war with France, had not been revived, and apparently adopted by a majority of New-England. The British faction, and the old tories, appeared to have disciplined the Federalists to a system which appeared to me fundamentally wrong, and I determined to oppose it." By this, sir, it appears most evidently, that instead of coming before the public to



make your defence, you have entered the *arena* of political controversy, with a view to prevent the success of one party, and to make the other predominant. In ordinary cases, we except motives, and answer arguments, but in this case it is material to shew, that you have sacrificed to your passions. This I can shew by your own concessions.

In my answer to the letter from which the sentence above is extracted, I said—"it contained many things which I admired, and many before unknown to me." I might have admired the seven lines of original poetry in which you compressed the plan you are now executing in your public letters. But is there in these lines, the least glimpse of your being actuated in the composition of these letters by a sense of obligation to yourself against any injustice done you by Gen. Hamilton? No, sir, not a shadow of it—your objects in these letters, as you revealed them to me in those sprigs of the Parnassian Mount, (and they appear as if intended to describe your whole design,) are all of another sort—they are slips engrafted on the stock of your hatred of Hamilton, and bear the same natural affinity to



your object in your public writings, as you disclosed in it the above-recited passage from your letter of the 8th of July, as despoiling is allied to the Agrarian Law.

As to what was before unknown to me in the letter last mentioned, it was nearly all so, as is plain from some recapitulations from it in my answer.

The passage recited from your letter of the 8th of July, is the most extraordinary confession of all, and is so intimately connected with the confession in the letter of the 22d of June, and in the letter of Sept. 27th, that they are essentially depending one upon another. The bud which put out in the letter of the 22d of June, dilated in the letter of the 8th of July, and fully expanded in the letter of Sept. 27th—This is the progress to maturity:—

*“My sons were very much delighted I had taken the subject up.”*

*“I should have gone to my grave, without writing a word, if the very system of Hamilton, a war with France, had not been revived and apparently adopted.”*

*“Poor Democrats, Republicans, and still*



*poorer Americans, are at the feet of John Bull and his calves ; matters cannot be much longer minced, the truth must out."*

Why were your sons delighted that you had taken the subject up ?

When I read the passage recited from the July letter, my attention and astonishment were equally enchained ; but as the measures of the Federalists, which appeared to you to have a warlike countenance against *friendly* France ; and which had brought you, according to your letter, from your sequestered abode into the field of controversy, had subsided by an accommodation with England, my alarm abated, and was soon lost in a supposition, that you felt yourself obliged to fill up the outline of your plan as you had presented it to the public, and that you would move slowly on after the winds had ceased, by the impetus given you by the first gusts. According to this outline, the public understand, that your present undertaking is to vindicate yourself against certain aspersions, which you consider unfounded in Gen. Hamilton's letter—but by the declarations made to me in two passages in your letter of July,



your design is very different ; and if it is not undeniably true that, under the semblance of a personal vindication, your design is nothing less than to baffle and defeat the measures you once advocated and supported, I may, without fear of contradiction, assert, *that it is to give more power and more extensive adoption, to the prejudices you once reviled and condemned !* Through whose instigation, or by what excitement, is this reverse of conduct ? To say it has been effected by a change of circumstances, is too palpably unfounded to be pretended. You do indeed, follow the above recited passage, with some swelling on your own ill treatment, but the personal complaints are evidently used in the letter as if intended for nothing more than to serve you with a convenient apology for your public appearance. If there is not an inconsistency here, and an inconsistency at the expense of what you ought most to value, there is a mystery in great management which I know as little how to solve, as a boor to explain a problem in Euclid. What has the prevalency of any system recommended by Gen. Hamilton to do with proving your pre-



miership in the negotiations of 1783? To give this proof, is the publicly avowed object of your publications in the Patriot.

Suffer me with seriousness to ask—Whether a war, for which we made great preparation in 1798, against France, and which you have said was actually waged, was not as much in accordance with the system of Hamilton, as the opposition measures of last winter, to which you have alluded, could have been? Most assuredly it was. And what part did you take in 1798? Gen. Hamilton himself said in your praise, that you “took upon the occasion, a manly and courageous lead—that you did all in your power to rouse the pride of the nation—to inspire it with a just sense of the injuries and outrages which it had experienced, and to dispose it to a firm and magnanimous resistance; and that your efforts contributed materially to the end.” You may possibly object that this does not come up to the full merit of your exertions, but you will not say that it outmeasures them.

In an answer to the address of the young men of New-York, dated May 1798, you say:—“I assure you, my young friends, that the satisfac-



tion with my conduct which has been expressed by the rising generation, has been one of the highest gratifications I ever received, because I can sincerely say, that their happiness, and that of their posterity, more than my own, or that of my cotemporaries, has been the object of the studies and labours of my life.”—The same sentiment, with more expansion, you expressed on several occasions. Enlivening the courage of the young men of Boston with encomiums on the public spirit of their fathers, you exclaim,—“To arms! my young friends, to arms!”—And in another answer to an address, you emulated a few examples in history of proud and generous patriotism, and wished the opposers of the measures then in operation, safely within the lines of the enemy. Had you been in your last hour, the young men of New-York standing around you, you could not have addressed them with more solemnity, nor apparently, with higher satisfaction in the consciousness of your sincerity. And what were “the studies and labours of your life,” which you then considered so important to the happiness of future generations? Pray, sir, con-



sider that an Omar, nor oblivion are yet your friends.

I entreat you now, to turn your eye to one line of the summary given of your character by Hamilton in the 13th page of his letter—and to a trait in the last paragraph of the 19th page, and then tell me with your hand on your heart, whether any thing, save a deep-rooted antipathy to Hamilton, Pickering, &c.—or a partiality to some others, the natural consequence of that antipathy, and equally unwarrantable, can account for your opposite appearance, on the same question, in the years 1798 and 1810? Certainly the same question in respect to the disposition towards us of England; and the same with regard to France, with the single exception, that England is in the same transgression. Tell me, too, whether this opposition will not sink your political character—your rectitude, to irredeemable perdition, as certainly so, as the giving way, in his old age, to his resentments against Demosthenes, and his favouring the views of the enemy, Nicanor, in disregard of the counsel of Dercyllus, sunk Phocion, surnamed for his early devotion to his country, the



good? Tell me, too, whether as a friend to the rights and liberties of my country, I am not bound to exhibit, that the causes of this opposition are such as ought to reduce an estimation of your professions of democratic republicanism, to a level with the estimation, long since made, of certain professions of Rolla and Clovis, made to facilitate the government of those to whom they were addressed?

No man is more deeply penetrated with a sense of the inviolability of confidential trusts. But were I to make oath to keep inviolate such a trust, conditional to its reception, and to make it with as much solemnity as Atrides swore that he surrendered the beautiful Briseis untouched to Achilles, and should make it without any sort of reservation, a reservation would yet exist in the duty, social and relative, which every man and every citizen is bound by solemn obligations to respect. A promise nor an oath of secrecy, is not to be constructed to extend to the transgression of the duty we are under from the instant of our birth, and of which there is never an intermission—it is a contradiction in



terms, that a man can bind himself to do what he is bound not to perform.

I have felt for you as a neighbourhood feel towards one brought up amongst them, whose actions now and then, incur suspicions, but which suspicions die away without reviving, until some act less equivocal than any preceding, or until some extraordinary occurrence shall awaken reflection, and put eyes into it, that it can see what before passed almost unobserved. In the letter from which I have extracted, you observed, that the portrait of Washington ought not to shove aside the portraits of John Hancock and Samuel Adams, in Fanueil Hall. Now, to say nothing of Samuel Adams, what was John Hancock? I will tell you what you yourself once said of him. In the afternoon of a day in the summer of 1791, some conversation respecting him led Mrs. Adams to remark, that he was born near your residence—you turned yourself towards your front door, and pointing to a spot in view, you laughingly exclaimed, “Yes! there’s the place where the great Governor Hancock was born.” Then, composing your countenance, and rolling your eye, you went on with these exclama-



tions—"John Hancock! A man without head and without heart—the mere shadow of a man, and yet a Governor of old Massachusetts!" Pausing a moment you breathed a sigh, which sorrowed, as plainly as a sigh could sorrow, for poor Massachusetts.

This, I expect, is the last letter I shall write you. You have had ample time to make objections to a public use of some parts of your letters, had you been disposed to make them. I shall, therefore, construct your assent to such an use from your silence, and shall so dispose of your letters as a sense of public duty shall dictate.

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

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## LETTER LXI.

QUINCY, Jan. 16, 1810.

*Dear Sir,*

I have received your three last letters. The correspondence and conversations which have passed between us have been under



the confidential seal of secrecy and friendship. Any violation of it will be a breach of honour and of plighted faith. I shall never release you from it, if it were in my power; but it is not. After all the permission that I could give, your conscience ought to restrain you. I could as well release you from your obligations of obedience to the Decalogue.

I hope you will consider, before you plunge yourself into an abyss, which the melancholy and disturbed state of mind you appear to be in seems to render you at this time incapable of perceiving before you.

In hopes you will soon be more calm, I am

Your well wisher,

JOHN ADAMS.

*Mr. William Cunningham, Jr.*

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## LETTER LXII.

FITCHBURG, Jan. 28, 1810.

*Dear Sir,*

I have received your favour of the 16th inst. I shall be scrupulously cautious against bringing myself under reproaches of my



conscience, and of giving any just occasion for the forfeiture of the esteem of those whose approbation, next to the consciousness of a good intention, is the most precious of all earthly consolations.

Much contained in our correspondence, and much more in our conversations, will not be extorted from me by any circumstances, out of yourself, while you live—some parts of it can never be divulged to any others than the implicated characters—perhaps never to them, nor is my resolution to divulge any part of either, yet decisively taken.

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*

*Quincy.*

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## LETTER LXIII.

FITCHBURG, *Jan.* 21, 1812.

*Dear Sir,*

Enclosed is a communication for the *Palladium*. I shall delay forwarding it to the printers for a few days, that if it contains any



thing unwarranted by your letters to and conversations with me, you may point out wherein.

I have been cruelly and unjustly treated by you—(He that is

“In rebellion with himself will have  
All that are his so too.”)

I have, nevertheless, in all that I have done, been sparing—Review your letter to me of the 16th of January 1810, in connection with the letters to which it was an answer, and say, what must be the opinion of an impartial world on that answer? It needs but a little knowledge of the human heart, and but a little acquaintance with history, to make the inferences.

I am, &c.

WM. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

*Hon. John Adams.*



## ERRATA.

Page 19, line 2 from the top, insert *female* before *virtue*.

Page 28, line 12 from the bottom, insert *rational* before *federalism*.

Page 40, line 8 from the bottom, for *where* read *whence*.

Page 64, line 10 from the bottom, for *editors* read *electors*.

Page 69, line 11 from the bottom, for *has* read *have*.

Letter XXV, page 79, date should be *Feb. 11.*

Page 81, line 9 from the top, for *Tories'* read *Frie's*.

Same page, bottom line, for *Phæcion* read *Phocion*.

Page 112, line 5, for *ore* read *one*.

Page 123, line 12 from the bottom, for "*a project of*" read "*the project of a.*"

Page 150, line 3 from the top, for *from* before *the* read *for*.

Page 162, line 10 from the top, for *ever* read *never*.

Page 194 line 8 from the top, for *one* read *me*.







